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THE GREENWOOD

No. 40

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

THE GREENWOOD

A Collection of Literary Readings
relating to
Robin Hood

Compiled by

Sir HENRY NEWBOLT

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Heigh-ho!
To the greenwood now let us go!
Sing heave and ho!
And there shall we find both buck and doe:
Sing heave and ho!
The hart and hind and the pretty little roe.
Sing heave and ho!

From "Pammelia" (1609).

THE GREENWOOD

I. MAID MARIAN

By T. L. Peacock

CHAPTER I

"Now come ye for peace here, or come ye for war?"—Scott.

"The abbot, in his alb arrayed," stood at the altar in the abbey-chapel of Rubygill, with all his plump, sleek, rosy friars, in goodly lines disposed, to solemnize the nuptials of the beautiful Matilda Fitzwater, daughter of the Baron of Arlingford, with the noble Robert Fitz-Ooth, Earl of Locksley and Huntingdon. The abbey of Rubygill stood in a picturesque valley, at a little distance from the western boundary of Sherwood Forest, in a spot which seemed adapted by nature to be the retreat of monastic mortification, being on the banks of a fine trout-stream, and in the midst of woodland coverts, abounding with excellent game. The bride, with her father and attendant maidens, entered the chapel; but the earl had not arrived. The baron was amazed, and the bridemaidens were disconcerted. Matilda feared that some evil had befallen her lover, but felt no diminution of her confidence in his honour and love. Through the open gates of the chapel she looked down the narrow road that wound along the side of the hill; and her ear was the first that heard the distant trampling of horses, and her eye was the first that caught the glitter of snowy plumes and the

light of polished spears. "It is strange," thought the baron, "that the earl should come in this martial array to his wedding;" but he had not long to meditate on the phenomenon, for the foaming steeds swept up to the gate like a whirlwind, and the earl, breathless with speed, and followed by a few of his yeomen, advanced to his smiling bride. It was then no time to ask questions, for the organ was in full peal, and the choristers were in full voice.

The abbot began to intone the ceremony in a style of modulation impressively exalted, his voice issuing most canonically from the roof of his mouth, through the medium of a very musical nose newly tuned for the occasion. But he had not proceeded far enough to exhibit all the variety and compass of this melodious instrument, when a noise was heard at the gate, and a party of armed men entered the chapel. The song of the choristers died away in a shake of demisemiquavers, contrary to all the rules of psalmody. The organ-blower, who was working his musical air-pump with one hand, and with two fingers and a thumb of the other insinuating a peeping-place through the curtain of the organ-gallery, was struck motionless by the double operation of curiosity and fear; while the organist, intent only on his performance, and spreading all his fingers to strike a swell of magnificent chords, felt his harmonic spirit ready to desert his body on being answered by the ghastly rattle of empty keys, and in the consequent *agitato furioso* of the internal movements of his feelings, was preparing to restore harmony by the *segue subito* of an *appoggiatura con foco* with the corner of a book of anthems on the head of his neglectful assistant, when his hand and his attention together were arrested by the scene below. The voice of the abbot subsided into silence through a descending scale of long-drawn melody, like the sound of the ebbing sea to the explorers of a cave. In a few moments all was silence, interrupted only by the iron

tread of the armed intruders, as it rang on the marble floor and echoed from the vaulted aisles.

The leader strode up to the altar; and placing himself opposite to the abbot, and between the earl and Matilda, in such a manner that the four together seemed to stand on the four points of a diamond, exclaimed, "In the name of King Henry, I forbid the ceremony, and attach Robert Earl of Huntingdon as a traitor!" and at the same time he held his drawn sword between the lovers, as if to emblem that royal authority which laid its temporal ban upon their contract. The earl drew his own sword instantly, and struck down the interposing weapon; then clasped his left arm round Matilda, who sprang into his embrace, and held his sword before her with his right hand. His yeomen ranged themselves at his side, and stood with their swords drawn, still and prepared, like men determined to die in his defence. The soldiers, confident in superiority of numbers, paused. The abbot took advantage of the pause to introduce a word of exhortation. "My children," said he, "if you are going to cut each other's throats, I entreat you, in the name of peace and charity, to do it out of the chapel."

"Sweet Matilda," said the earl, "did you give your love to the Earl of Huntingdon, whose lands touch the Ouse and the Trent, or to Robert Fitz-Ooth, the son of his mother?"

"Neither to the earl nor his earldom," answered Matilda firmly, "but to Robert Fitz-Ooth and his love."

"That I well knew," said the earl; "and though the ceremony be incomplete, we are not the less married in the eye of my only saint, our Lady, who will yet bring us together. Lord Fitzwater, to your care, for the present, I commit your daughter.—Nay, sweet Matilda, part we must for a while; but we will soon meet under brighter skies, and be this the seal of our faith."

He kissed Matilda's lips, and consigned her to the baron, who glowered about him with an expression of countenance that showed he was mortally wroth with somebody ; but whatever he thought or felt he kept to himself. The earl, with a sign to his followers, made a sudden charge on the soldiers, with the intention of cutting his way through. The soldiers were prepared for such an occurrence, and a desperate skirmish succeeded. Some of the women screamed, but none of them fainted ; for fainting was not so much the fashion in those days, when the ladies breakfasted on brawn and ale at sunrise, as in our more refined age of green tea and muffins at noon. Matilda seemed disposed to fly again to her lover, but the baron forced her from the chapel. The earl's bowmen at the door sent in among the assailants a volley of arrows, one of which whizzed past the ear of the abbot, who, in mortal fear of being suddenly translated from a ghostly friar into a friarly ghost, began to roll out of the chapel as fast as his bulk and his holy robes would permit, roaring "Sacrilege!" with all his monks at his heels, who were like himself, more intent to go at once than to stand upon the order of their going. The abbot, thus pressed from behind, and stumbling over his own drapery before, fell suddenly prostrate in the door-way that connected the chapel with the abbey, and was instantaneously buried under a pyramid of ghostly carcasses, that fell over him and each other, and lay a rolling chaos of animated rotundities, sprawling and bawling in unseemly disarray, and sending forth the names of all the saints in and out of heaven, amidst the clashing of swords, the ringing of bucklers, the clattering of helmets, the twanging of bow-strings, the whizzing of arrows, the screams of women, the shouts of the warriors, and the vociferations of the peasantry, who had been assembled to the intended nuptials, and who, seeing a fair set-to, contrived to pick a quarrel among themselves on the occasion, and proceeded, with

staff and cudgel, to crack each other's skulls, for the good of the king and the earl. One tall friar alone was untouched by the panic of his brethren, and stood steadfastly watching the combat with his arms akimbo, the colossal emblem of an unarmed neutrality.

At length, through the midst of the internal confusion, the earl, by the help of his good sword, the staunch valour of his men, and the blessing of the Virgin, fought his way to the chapel-gate—his bowmen closed him in—he vaulted into his saddle, clapped spurs to his horse, rallied his men on the first eminence, and exchanged his sword for a bow and arrow, with which he did old execution among the pursuers, who at last thought it most expedient to desist from offensive warfare, and to retreat into the abbey, where, in the king's name, they broached a pipe of the best wine, and attached all the venison in the larder, having first carefully unpacked the tuft of friars, and set the fallen abbot on his legs.

The friars, it may be well supposed, and such of the king's men as escaped unhurt from the affray, found their spirits a cup too low, and kept the flask moving from noon till night. The peaceful brethren, unused to the tumult of war, had undergone, from fear and discomposure, an exhaustion of animal spirits that required extraordinary refection. During the repast they interrogated Sir Ralph Montfaucon, the leader of the soldiers, respecting the nature of the earl's offence.

"A complication of offences," replied Sir Ralph, "superinduced on the original basis of forest-treason. He began with hunting the king's deer, in despite of all remonstrance; followed it up by contempt of the king's mandates, and by armed resistance to his power, in defiance of all authority; and combined with it the resolute withholding of payment of certain moneys to the abbot of Doncaster, in denial of all law; and has thus made himself the declared enemy of church and

state, and all for being too fond of venison." And the knight helped himself to half a pasty.

"A heinous offender," said a little round oily friar, appropriating the portion of pasty which Sir Ralph had left.

"The earl is a worthy peer," said the tall friar whom we have already mentioned in the chapel scene, "and the best marksman in England."

"Why this is flat treason, brother Michael," said the little round friar, "to call an attainted traitor a worthy peer."

"I pledge you," said brother Michael. The little friar smiled and filled his cup. "He will draw the long bow," pursued brother Michael, "with any bold yeoman among them all."

"Don't talk of the long bow," said the abbot, who had the sound of the arrow still whizzing in his ear: "what have we pillars of the faith to do with the long bow?"

"Be that as it may," said Sir Ralph, "he is an outlaw from this moment."

"So much the worse for the law then," said brother Michael. "The law will have a heavier miss of him than he will have of the law. He will strike as much venison as ever, and more of other game. I know what I say; but *basta:* Let us drink."

"What other game?" said the little friar. "I hope he won't poach among our partridges."

"Poach! not he," said brother Michael: "if he wants your partridges, he will strike them under your nose (here's to you), and drag your trout-stream for you on a Thursday evening."

"Monstrous! and starve us on fast-day," said the little friar.

"But that is not the game I mean," said brother Michael.

"Surely, son Michael," said the abbot, "you do not mean to insinuate that the noble earl will turn freebooter?"

"A man must live," said brother Michael, "earl or no. If the law takes his rents and beeves without his consent, he must take beeves and rents where he can get them without the consent of the law. This is the *lex talionis*."

"Truly," said Sir Ralph, "I am sorry for the damsel: she seems fond of this wild runagate."

"A mad girl, a mad girl," said the little friar.

"How a mad girl?" said brother Michael. "Has she not beauty, grace, wit, sense, discretion, dexterity, learning, and valour?"

"Learning!" exclaimed the little friar; "what has a woman to do with learning? And valour! who ever heard a woman commended for valour? Meekness and mildness, and softness, and gentleness, and tenderness, and humility, and obedience to her husband, and faith in her confessor, and domesticity, or, as learned doctors call it, the faculty of stayathomeitiveness, and embroidery, and music, and pickling, and preserving, and the whole complex and multiplex detail of the noble science of dinner, as well in preparation for the table, as in arrangement over it, and in distribution around it to knights, and squires, and ghostly friars, —these are female virtues: but valour—why, who ever heard——?"

"She is the all in all," said brother Michael, "gentle as a ring-dove, yet high-soaring as a falcon: humble below her deserving, yet deserving beyond the estimate of panegyric: an exact economist in all superfluity, yet a most bountiful dispenser in all liberality: the chief regulator of her household, the fairest pillar of her hall, and the sweetest blossom of her bower: having, in all opposite proposings, sense to understand, judgment to weigh, discretion to choose, firmness to undertake, diligence to conduct, perseverance to accomplish, and resolution to maintain. For obedience to her husband, that is not to be tried till she has one: for faith in her confessor, she has as much as the law

prescribes : for embroidery an Arachne : for music a Siren : and for pickling and preserving, did not one of her jars of sugared apricots give you your last surfeit at Arlingford Castle ? "

" Call you that preserving ? " said the little friar ; " I call it destroying. Call you it pickling ? Truly it pickled me. My life was saved by miracle."

" By canary," said brother Michael. " Canary is the only life preserver, the true *aurum potabile*, the universal panacea for all diseases, thirst, and short life. Your life was saved by canary."

" Indeed, reverend father," said Sir Ralph, " if the young lady be half what you describe, she must be a paragon ; but your commending her for valour does somewhat amaze me."

" She can fence," said the little friar, " and draw the long bow, and play at single-stick and quarter-staff."

" Yet mark you," said brother Michael, " not like a virago or a hoyden, or one that would crack a serving-man's head for spilling gravy on her ruff, but with such womanly grace and temperate self-command as if those manly exercises belonged to her only, and were become for her sake feminine."

" You incite me," said Sir Ralph, " to view her more nearly. That madcap earl found me other employment than to remark her in the chapel."

" The earl is a worthy peer," said brother Michael ; " he is worth any fourteen earls on this side Trent, and any seven on the other." (The reader will please to remember that Rubygill Abbey was *north* of Trent.)

" His mettle will be tried," said Sir Ralph. " There is many a courtier will swear to King Henry to bring him in dead or alive."

" They must look to the brambles then," said brother Michael—

"The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble,
Doth make a jest
Of silken vest,
That will through greenwood scramble:
The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble."

"Plague on your lungs, son Michael," said the abbot; "this is your old coil: always roaring in your cups."

"I know what I say," said brother Michael; "there is often more sense in an old song than in a new homily—

"The courtly pad doth amble,
When his gay lord would ramble:
But both may catch
An awkward scratch,
If they ride among the bramble:
The bramble, the bramble, the bonny forest bramble."

"Tall friar," said Sir Ralph, "either you shoot the shafts of your merriment at random, or you know more of the earl's designs than beseems your frock."

"Let my frock," said brother Michael, "answer for its own sins. It is worn past covering mine. It is too weak for a shield, too transparent for a screen, too thin for a shelter, too light for gravity, and too threadbare for a jest. The wearer would be naught indeed who should misbeseem such a wedding garment—

"But wherefore does the sheep wear wool?
That he in season sheared may be,
And the shepherd be warm though his flock be cool:
So I'll have a new cloak about me."

CHAPTER II

"Vray moyne si oncques en feut depuis que le monde moynant moyna de moynerie."—RABELAIS.

THE Earl of Huntingdon, living in the vicinity of a royal forest, and passionately attached to the chase from his infancy, had long made as free with the king's deer as Lord Percy proposed to do with those of Lord Douglas in the memorable hunting of Cheviot. It is sufficiently well known how severe were the forest-laws in those days, and with what jealousy the kings of England maintained this branch of their prerogative; but menaces and remonstrances were thrown away on the earl, who declared that he would not thank Saint Peter for admission into Paradise, if he were obliged to leave his bow and hounds at the gate. King Henry (the Second) swore by Saint Botolph to make him rue his sport, and, having caused him to be duly and formally accused, summoned him to London to answer the charge. The earl, deeming himself safer among his own vassals than among King Henry's courtiers, took no notice of the mandate. King Henry sent a force to bring him, *vi et armis*, to court. The earl made a resolute resistance, and put the king's force to flight under a shower of arrows: an act which the courtiers declared to be treason. At the same time, the abbot of Doncaster sued up the payment of certain moneys, which the earl, whose revenue ran a losing race with his hospitality, had borrowed at sundry times of the said abbot: for the abbots and the bishops were the chief usurers of those days, and, as the end sanctifies the means, were not in the least scrupulous of employing what would have been extortion in the profane, to accomplish the pious purpose of bringing a blessing on the land by rescuing it from the frail hold of carnal and temporal into the firmer grasp of ghostly and spiritual possessors. But the earl, confident in the number and

attachment of his retainers, stoutly refused either to repay the money, which he could not, or to yield the forfeiture, which he would not: a refusal which in those days was an act of outlawry in a gentleman, as it is now of bankruptcy in a base mechanic; the gentleman having in our wiser times a more liberal privilege of gentility, which enables him to keep his land and laugh at his creditor. Thus the mutual resentments and interests of the king and the abbot concurred to subject the earl to the penalties of outlawry, by which the abbot would gain his due upon the lands of Locksley, and the rest would be confiscate to the king. Still the king did not think it advisable to assail the earl in his own stronghold, but caused a diligent watch to be kept over his motions, till at length his rumoured marriage with the heiress of Arlingford seemed to point out an easy method of laying violent hands on the offender. Sir Ralph Montfaucon, a young man of good lineage and of an aspiring temper, who readily seized the first opportunity that offered of recommending himself to King Henry's favour by manifesting his zeal in his service, undertook the charge: and how he succeeded we have seen.

Sir Ralph's curiosity was strongly excited by the friar's description of the young lady of Arlingford; and he prepared in the morning to visit the castle, under the very plausible pretext of giving the baron an explanation of his intervention at the nuptials. Brother Michael and the little fat friar proposed to be his guides. The proposal was courteously accepted, and they set out together, leaving Sir Ralph's followers at the abbey. The knight was mounted on a spirited charger; brother Michael on a large heavy-trotting horse; and the little fat friar on a plump soft-paced galloway, so correspondent with himself in size, rotundity, and sleekness, that if they had been amalgamated into a centaur, there would have been nothing to alter in their proportions.

" Do you know," said the little friar, as they wound along the banks of the stream, " the reason why lake-trout is better than river-trout, and shyer withal ? "

" I was not aware of the fact," said Sir Ralph.

" A most heterodox remark," said brother Michael : " know you not, that in all nice matters you should take the implication for absolute, and, without looking into the *fact whether*, seek only the *reason why ?* But the fact is so, on the word of a friar ; which what layman will venture to gainsay who prefers a down-bed to a gridiron ? "

" The fact being so," said the knight, " I am still at a loss for the reason ; nor would I undertake to opine in a matter of that magnitude : since, in all that appertains to the good things either of this world or the next, my reverend spiritual guides are kind enough to take the trouble of thinking off my hands."

" Spoken," said brother Michael, " with a sound Catholic conscience. My little brother here is most profound in the matter of trout. He has marked, learned, and inwardly digested the subject, twice a week at least for five-and-thirty years. I yield to him in this. My strong points are venison and canary."

" The good qualities of a trout," said the little friar, " are firmness and redness : the redness, indeed, being the visible sign of all other virtues."

" Whence," said brother Michael, " we choose our abbot by his nose :—

> " The rose on the nose doth all virtues disclose :
> For the outward grace shows
> That the inward overflows,
> When it glows in the rose of a red, red nose."

" Now," said the little friar, " as is the firmness so is the redness, and as is the redness so is the shyness."

" Marry why ? " said brother Michael. " The solution is not physical-natural, but physical-historical, or

natural-superinductive. And thereby hangs a tale, which may be either said or sung :—

"The damsel stood to watch the fight
By the banks of Kingslea Mere,
And they brought to her feet her own true knight
Sore-wounded on a bier.

She knelt by him his wounds to bind,
She washed them with many a tear ;
And shouts rose fast upon the wind,
Which told that the foe was near.

'Oh ! let not,' he said, 'while yet I live,
The cruel foe me take :
But with thy sweet lips a last kiss give,
And cast me in the lake.'

Around his neck she wound her arms,
And she kissed his lips so pale :
And evermore the war's alarms
Came louder up the vale.

She drew him to the lake's steep side,
Where the red heath fringed the shore ;
She plunged with him beneath the tide,
And they were seen no more.

Their true blood mingled in Kingslea Mere,
That to mingle on earth was fain :
And the trout that swims in that crystal clear
Is tinged with the crimson stain."

"Thus you see how good comes of evil, and how a holy friar may fare better on fast-day for the violent death of two lovers two hundred years ago. The inference is most consecutive, that wherever you catch a red-fleshed trout, love lies bleeding under the water : an occult quality, which can only act in the stationary waters of a lake, being neutralized by the rapid transition of those of a stream."

" And why is the trout shyer for that ? " asked Sir Ralph.

" Do you not see ? " said brother Michael. " The virtues of both lovers diffuse themselves through the lake. The infusion of masculine valour makes the fish active and sanguineous : the infusion of maiden modesty makes him coy and hard to win : and you shall find through life, the fish which is most easily hooked is not the best worth dishing. But yonder are the towers of Arlingford."

The little friar stopped. He seemed suddenly struck with an awful thought, which caused a momentary pallescence in his rosy complexion ; and after a brief hesitation, he turned his galloway, and told his companions he should give them good day.

" Why, what is in the wind now, brother Peter ? " said Friar Michael.

" The lady Matilda," said the little friar, " can draw the long-bow. She must bear no goodwill to Sir Ralph ; and if she should espy him from her tower, she may testify her recognition with a cloth-yard shaft. She is not so infallible a markswoman, but that she might shoot at a crow and kill a pigeon. She might peradventure miss the knight, and hit me, who never did her any harm."

" Tut, tut, man," said brother Michael, " there is no such fear."

" Mass," said the little friar, " but there is such a fear, and very strong too. You who have it not may keep your way, and I who have it shall take mine. I am not just now in the vein for being picked off at a long shot." And saying these words, he spurred up his four-footed better half, and galloped off as nimbly as if he had had an arrow singing behind him.

" Is this lady Matilda, then, so very terrible a damsel ? " said Sir Ralph to brother Michael.

" By no means," said the friar. " She has certainly a high spirit ; but it is the wing of the eagle, without

his beak or his claw. She is as gentle as magnanimous; but it is the gentleness of the summer wind, which, however lightly it wave the tuft of the pine, carries with it the intimation of a power that, if roused to its extremity, could make it bend to the dust."

"From the warmth of your panegyric, ghostly father," said the knight, "I should almost suspect you were in love with the damsel."

"So I am," said the friar, "and I care not who knows it; but all in the way of honesty, master soldier. I am, as it were, her spiritual lover; and were she a damsel errant, I would be her ghostly esquire, her friar militant. I would buckle me in armour of proof, and the devil might thresh me black with an iron flail, before I would knock under in her cause. Though they be not yet one canonically, thanks to your soldiership, the earl is her liege lord, and she is his liege lady. I am her father confessor and ghostly director: I have taken on me to show her the way to the next world; and how can I do that if I lose sight of her in this? seeing that this is but the road to the other, and has so many circumvolutions and ramifications of bye-ways and beaten paths (all more thickly set than the true one with finger-posts and mile-stones, not one of which tells truth), that a traveller has need of some one who knows the way, or the odds go hard against him that he will ever see the face of Saint Peter."

"But there must surely be some reason," said Sir Ralph, "for father Peter's apprehension."

"None," said brother Michael, "but the apprehension itself; fear being its own father, and most prolific in self-propagation. The lady did, it is true, once signalize her displeasure against our little brother, for reprimanding her in that she would go hunting a-mornings instead of attending matins. She cut short the thread of his eloquence by sportively drawing her bow-string and loosing an arrow over his head; he waddled off with singular speed, and was in much awe

of her for many months. I thought he had forgotten it: but let that pass. In truth, she would have had little of her lover's company, if she had liked the chaunt of the choristers better than the cry of the hounds: yet I know not; for they were companions from the cradle, and reciprocally fashioned each other to the love of the fern and the fox-glove. Had either been less sylvan, the other might have been more saintly; but they will now never hear matins but those of the lark, nor reverence vaulted aisle but that of the greenwood canopy. They are twin plants of the forest, and are identified with its growth—

"For the slender beech and the sapling oak,
That grow by the shadowy rill,
You may cut down both at a single stroke,
You may cut down which you will.

But this you must know, that as long as they grow,
Whatever change may be,
You never can teach either oak or beech
To be aught but a greenwood tree."

CHAPTER III

"Inflamed wrath in glowing breast."—BUTLER.

THE knight and the friar arriving at Arlingford Castle, and leaving their horses in the care of lady Matilda's groom, with whom the friar was in great favour, were ushered into a stately apartment, where they found the baron alone, flourishing an enormous carving-knife over a brother baron—of beef—with as much vehemence of action as if he were cutting down an enemy. The baron was a gentleman of a fierce and choleric temperament: he was lineally descended from the redoubtable Fierabras of Normandy, who came over

to England with the Conqueror, and who, in the battle of Hastings, killed with his own hand four-and-twenty Saxon cavaliers all on a row. The very excess of the baron's internal rage on the preceding day had smothered its external manifestation: he was so equally angry with both parties, that he knew not on which to vent his wrath. He was enraged with the earl for having brought himself into such a dilemma without his privity; and he was no less enraged with the king's men for their very unseasonable intrusion. He could willingly have fallen upon both parties, but he must necessarily have begun with one; and he felt that on whichever side he should strike the first blow, his retainers would immediately join battle. He had therefore contented himself with forcing away his daughter from the scene of action. In the course of the evening he had received intelligence that the earl's castle was in possession of a party of the king's men, who had been detached by Sir Ralph Montfaucon to seize on it during the earl's absence. The baron inferred from this that the earl's case was desperate; and those who have had the opportunity of seeing a rich friend fall suddenly into poverty, may easily judge by their own feelings how quickly and completely the whole moral being of the earl was changed in the baron's estimation. The baron immediately proceeded to require in his daughter's mind the same summary revolution that had taken place in his own, and considered himself exceedingly ill-used by her non-compliance. The lady had retired to her chamber, and the baron had passed a supperless and sleepless night, stalking about his apartments till an advanced hour of the morning, when hunger compelled him to summon into his presence the spoils of the buttery, which, being the intended array of an uneaten wedding feast, were more than usually abundant, and on which, when the knight and the friar entered, he was falling with desperate valour. He looked up at them

fiercely, with his mouth full of beef and his eyes full of flame, and rising, as ceremony required, made an awful bow to the knight, inclining himself forward over the table and presenting his carving-knife, *en militaire*, in a manner that seemed to leave it doubtful whether he meant to show respect to his visitor, or to defend his provision : but the doubt was soon cleared up by his politely motioning the knight to be seated ; on which the friar advanced to the table, saying, " For what we are going to receive," and commenced operations without further prelude by filling and drinking a goblet of wine. The baron at the same time offered one to Sir Ralph, with the look of a man in whom habitual hospitality and courtesy were struggling with the ebullitions of natural anger. They pledged each other in silence, and the baron, having completed a copious draught, continued working his lips and his throat, as if trying to swallow his wrath as he had done his wine. Sir Ralph, not knowing well what to make of these ambiguous signs, looked for instructions to the friar, who by significant looks and gestures seemed to advise him to follow his example and partake of the good cheer before him, without speaking till the baron should be more intelligible in his demeanour. The knight and the friar, accordingly, proceeded to refect themselves after their ride ; the baron looking first at the one and then at the other, scrutinizing alternately the serious looks of the knight and the merry face of the friar, till at length, having calmed himself sufficiently to speak, he said, " Courteous knight and ghostly father, I presume you have some other business with me than to eat my beef and drink my canary ; and if so, I patiently await your leisure to enter on the topic."

" Lord Fitzwater," said Sir Ralph, " in obedience to my royal master, King Henry, I have been the unwilling instrument of frustrating the intended nuptials of your fair daughter ; yet will you, I trust, owe

me no displeasure for my agency herein, seeing that the noble maiden might otherwise by this time have been the bride of an outlaw."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said the baron; "very exceedingly obliged. Your solicitude for my daughter is truly paternal, and for a young man and a stranger very singular and exemplary: and it is very kind withal to come to the relief of my insufficiency and inexperience, and concern yourself so much in that which concerns you not."

"You misconceive the knight, noble baron," said the friar. "He urges not his reason in the shape of a preconceived intent, but in that of a subsequent extenuation. True, he has done the lady Matilda great wrong——"

"How, great wrong?" said the baron. "What do you mean by great wrong? Would you have had her married to a wild fly-by-night, that accident made an earl and nature a deer-stealer? that has not wit enough to eat venison without picking a quarrel with monarchy? that flings away his own lands into the clutches of rascally friars, for the sake of hunting in other men's grounds, and feasting vagabonds that wear Lincoln green, and would have flung away mine into the bargain if he had had my daughter? What do you mean by great wrong?"

"True," said the friar: "great right, I meant."

"Right!" exclaimed the baron: "what right has any man to do my daughter right but myself? What right has any man to drive my daughter's bridegroom out of the chapel in the middle of the marriage ceremony, and turn all our merry faces into green wounds and bloody coxcombs, and then come and tell me he has done us great right?"

"True," said the friar: "he has done neither right nor wrong."

"But he has," said the baron, "he has done both, and I will maintain it with my glove."

"It shall not need," said Sir Ralph; "I will concede any thing in honour."

"And I," said the baron, "will concede nothing in honour: I will concede nothing in honour to any man."

"Neither will I, Lord Fitzwater," said Sir Ralph, "in that sense: but hear me. I was commissioned by the king to apprehend the Earl of Huntingdon. I brought with me a party of soldiers, picked and tried men, knowing that he would not lightly yield. I sent my lieutenant with a detachment to surprise the earl's castle in his absence, and laid my measures for intercepting him on the way to his intended nuptials; but he seems to have had intimation of this part of my plan, for he brought with him a large armed retinue, and took a circuitous route, which made him, I believe, somewhat later than his appointed hour. When the lapse of time showed me that he had taken another track, I pursued him to the chapel; and I would have awaited the close of the ceremony, if I had thought that either yourself or your daughter would have felt desirous that she should have been the bride of an outlaw."

"Who said, sir," cried the baron, "that we were desirous of any such thing? But truly, sir, if I had a mind to the devil for a son-in-law, I would fain see the man that should venture to interfere."

"That would I," said the friar; "for I have undertaken to make her renounce the devil."

"She shall not renounce the devil," said the baron, "unless I please. You are very ready with your undertakings. Will you undertake to make her renounce the earl, who, I believe, is the devil incarnate? Will you undertake that?"

"Will I undertake," said the friar, "to make Trent run westward, or to make flame burn downward, or to make a tree grow with its head in the earth and its root in the air?"

"So then," said the baron, "a girl's mind is as hard to change as nature and the elements, and it is easier to make her renounce the devil than a lover. Are you a match for the devil, and no match for a man?"

"My warfare," said the friar, "is not of this world. I am militant not against man, but the devil, who goes about seeking what he may devour."

"Oh! does he so?" said the baron: "then I take it that makes you look for him so often in my buttery. Will you cast out the devil whose name is Legion, when you cannot cast out the imp whose name is Love?"

"Marriages," said the friar, "are made in heaven. Love is God's work, and therewith I meddle not."

"God's work, indeed!" said the baron, "when the ceremony was cut short in the church. Could men have put them asunder, if God had joined them together? And the earl is now no earl, but plain Robert Fitz-Ooth: therefore, I'll none of him."

"He may atone," said the friar, "and the king may mollify. The earl is a worthy peer, and the king is a courteous king."

"He cannot atone," said Sir Ralph. "He has killed the king's men; and if the baron should aid and abet, he will lose his castle and land."

"Will I?" said the baron; "not while I have a drop of blood in my veins. He that comes to take them shall first serve me as the friar serves my flasks of canary: he shall drain me dry as hay. Am I not disparaged? Am I not outraged? Is not my daughter vilified, and made a mockery? A girl half-married? There was my butler brought home with a broken head. My butler, friar: there is that may move your sympathy. Friar, the earl-no-earl shall come no more to my daughter."

"Very good," said the friar.

"It is not very good," said the baron, "for I cannot get her to say so."

" I fear," said Sir Ralph, " the young lady must be much distressed and discomposed."

" Not a whit, sir," said the baron. " She is, as usual, in a most provoking imperturbability, and contradicts me so smilingly that it would enrage you to see her."

" I had hoped," said Sir Ralph, " that I might have seen her, to make my excuse in person for the hard necessity of my duty."

He had scarcely spoken, when the door opened, and the lady made her appearance.

CHAPTER IV

" Are you mad, or what are you, that you squeak out your catches without mitigation or remorse of voice ? "—*Twelfth Night.*

MATILDA, not dreaming of visitors, tripped into the apartment in a dress of forest green, with a small quiver by her side, and a bow and arrow in her hand. Her hair, black and glossy as the raven's wing, curled like wandering clusters of dark ripe grapes under the edge of her round bonnet ; and a plume of black feathers fell back negligently above it, with an almost horizontal inclination, that seemed the habitual effect of rapid motion against the wind. Her black eyes sparkled like sunbeams on a river : a clear, deep, liquid radiance, the reflection of ethereal fire,—tempered, not subdued, in the medium of its living and gentle mirror. Her lips were half opened to speak as she entered the apartment ; and with a smile of recognition to the friar, and a courtesy to the stranger knight, she approached the baron and said, " You are late at your breakfast, father."

" I am not at breakfast," said the baron. " I have been at supper : my last night's supper ; for I had none."

'I am sorry," said Matilda, "you should have gone to bed supperless."

"I did not go to bed supperless," said the baron: "I did not go to bed at all: and what are you doing with that green dress and that bow and arrow?"

"I am going a-hunting," said Matilda.

"A-hunting!" said the baron. "What, I warrant you, to meet with the earl, and slip your neck into the same noose?"

"No," said Matilda: "I am not going out of our own woods to-day."

"How do I know that?" said the baron. "What surety have I of that?"

"Here is the friar," said Matilda. "He will be surety."

"Not he," said the baron: "he will undertake nothing but where the devil is a party concerned."

"Yes, I will," said the friar: "I will undertake anything for the lady Matilda."

"No matter for that," said the baron: "she shall not go hunting to-day."

"Why, father," said Matilda, "if you coop me up here in this odious castle, I shall pine and die like a lonely swan on a pool."

"No," said the baron, "the lonely swan does not die on the pool. If there be a river at hand, she flies to the river, and finds her a mate; and so shall not you."

"But," said Matilda, "you may send with me any, or as many, of your grooms as you will."

"My grooms," said the baron, "are all false knaves. There is not a rascal among them but loves you better than me. Villains that I feed and clothe."

"Surely," said Matilda, "it is not villainy to love me: if it be, I should be sorry my father were an honest man." The baron relaxed his muscles into a smile. "Or my lover either," added Matilda. The baron looked grim again.

"For your lover," said the baron, "you may give

God thanks of him. He is as arrant a knave as ever poached."

"What, for hunting the king's deer?" said Matilda. "Have I not heard you rail at the forest laws by the hour?"

"Did you ever hear me," said the baron, "rail myself out of house and land? If I had done that, then were I a knave."

"My lover," said Matilda, "is a brave man, and a true man, and a generous man, and a young man, and a handsome man; aye, and an honest man too."

"How can he be an honest man," said the baron, "when he has neither house nor land, which are the better part of a man?"

"They are but the husk of a man," said Matilda, "the worthless coat of the chesnut: the man himself is the kernel."

"The man is the grape stone," said the baron, "and the pulp of the melon. The house and land are the true substantial fruit, and all that give him savour and value."

"He will never want house or land," said Matilda, "while the meeting boughs weave a green roof in the wood, and the free range of the hart marks out the bounds of the forest."

"Vert and venison! vert and venison!" exclaimed the baron. "Treason and flat rebellion. Confound your smiling face! what makes you look so good-humoured? What! you think I can't look at you, and be in a passion? You think so, do you? We shall see. Have you no fear in talking thus, when here is the king's liegeman come to take us all into custody, and confiscate our goods and chattels?"

"Nay, Lord Fitzwater," said Sir Ralph, "you wrong me in your report. My visit is one of courtesy and excuse, not of menace and authority."

"There it is," said the baron: "every one takes a pleasure in contradicting me. Here is this courteous

knight, who has not opened his mouth three times since he has been in my house except to take in provision, cuts me short in my story with a flat denial."

"Oh! I cry you mercy, sir knight," said Matilda; "I did not mark you before. I am your debtor for no slight favour, and so is my liege lord."

"Her liege lord!" exclaimed the baron, taking large strides across the chamber.

"Pardon me, gentle lady," said Sir Ralph. "Had I known you before yesterday, I would have cut off my right hand ere it should have been raised to do you displeasure."

"Oh sir," said Matilda, "a good man may be forced on an ill office: but I can distinguish the man from his duty." She presented to him her hand, which he kissed respectfully, and simultaneously with the contact thirty-two invisible arrows plunged at once into his heart, one from every point of the compass of his pericardia.

"Well, father," added Matilda, "I must go to the woods."

"Must you?" said the baron; "I say you must not."

"But I am going," said Matilda.

"But I will have up the drawbridge," said the baron.

"But I will swim the moat," said Matilda.

"But I will secure the gates," said the baron.

"But I will leap from the battlement," said Matilda.

"But I will lock you in an upper chamber," said the baron.

"But I will shred the tapestry," said Matilda, "and let myself down."

"But I will lock you in a turret," said the baron, "where you shall only see light through a loophole."

"But through that loophole," said Matilda, "will I take my flight, like a young eagle from its aerie; and,

father, while I go out freely, I will return willingly: but if once I slip out through a loop-hole—" She paused a moment, and then added, singing,—

"The love that follows fain
Will never its faith betray:
But the faith that is held in a chain
Will never be found again,
If a single link give way."

The melody acted irresistibly on the harmonious propensities of the friar, who accordingly sang in his turn,—

"For hark! hark! hark!
The dog doth bark,
That watches the wild deer's lair.
The hunter awakes at the peep of the dawn,
But the lair it is empty, the deer it is gone,
And the hunter knows not where."

Matilda and the friar then sang together,—

"Then follow, oh follow! the hounds do cry:
The red sun flames in the eastern sky:
The stag bounds over the hollow.
He that lingers in spirit, or loiters in hall,
Shall see us no more till the evening fall,
And no voice but the echo shall answer his call:
Then follow, oh follow, follow:
Follow, oh follow, follow!"

During the process of this harmony, the baron's eyes wandered from his daughter to the friar, and from the friar to his daughter again, with an alternate expression of anger differently modified: when he looked on the friar, it was anger without qualification; when he looked on his daughter it was still anger, but tempered by an expression of involuntary admiration and pleasure. These rapid fluctuations of the baron's physiognomy—the habitual, reckless, resolute merri-

ment in the jovial face of the friar,—and the cheerful, elastic spirits that played on the lips and sparkled in the eyes of Matilda—would have presented a very amusing combination to Sir Ralph, if one of the three images in the group had not absorbed his total attention with feelings of intense delight very nearly allied to pain. The baron's wrath was somewhat counteracted by the reflection that his daughter's good spirits seemed to show that they would naturally rise triumphant over all disappointments; and he had had sufficient experience of her humour to know that she might sometimes be led, but never could be driven. Then, too, he was always delighted to hear her sing, though he was not at all pleased in this instance with the subject of her song. Still he would have endured the subject for the sake of the melody of the treble, but his mind was not sufficiently attuned to unison to relish the harmony of the bass. The friar's accompaniment put him out of all patience, and—"So," he exclaimed, "this is the way you teach my daughter to renounce the devil, is it? A hunting friar, truly! Who ever heard before of a hunting friar? A profane, roaring, bawling, bumper-bibbing, neck-breaking, catch-singing friar?"

"Under favour, bold baron," said the friar; but the friar was warm with canary, and in his singing vein; and he could not go on in plain unmusical prose. He therefore sang in a new tune,—

"Though I be now a grey, grey friar,
  Yet I was once a hale young knight:
The cry of my dogs was the only choir
  In which my spirit did take delight.

Little I recked of matin bell,
  But drowned its toll with my clanging horn:
And the only beads I loved to tell
  Were the beads of dew on the spangled thorn."

The baron was going to storm, but the friar paused, and Matilda sang in repetition,—

"Little I reck of matin bell,
But drown its toll with my clanging horn :
And the only beads I loved to tell
Are the beads of dew on the spangled thorn."

And then she and the friar sang the four lines together, and rang the changes upon them alternately.

"Little I reck of matin bell,"

sang the friar.

"A precious friar," said the baron.

"But drown its toll with my clanging horn,"

sang Matilda.

"More shame for you," said the baron.

"And the only beads I love to tell
Are the beads of dew on the spangled thorn,"

sang Matilda and the friar together.

"Petitent and confessor," said the baron : "a hopeful pair truly."

The friar went on,—

"An archer keen I was withal,
As ever did lean on greenwood tree ;
And could make the fleetest roebuck fall,
A good three hundred yards from me.
Though changeful time, with hand severe,
Has made me now these joys forego,
Yet my heart bounds whene'er I hear,
Yoicks ! hark away ! and tally ho !"

Matilda chimed in as before.

"Are you mad ?" said the baron. "Are you

insane? Are you possessed? What do you mean? What in the devil's name do you both mean?"

"Yoicks! hark away! and tally ho!"

roared the friar.

The baron's bent-up wrath had accumulated like the waters above the dam of an overshot mill. The pond-head of his passion being now filled to the utmost limit of its capacity, and beginning to overflow in the quivering of his lips and the flashing of his eyes, he pulled up all the flash-boards at once, and gave loose to the full torrent of his indignation, by seizing, like furious Ajax, not a massy stone more than two modern men could raise, but a vast dish of beef more than fifty ancient yeomen could eat, and whirled it like a coit, *in terrorem*, over the head of the friar, to the extremity of the apartment,

"Where it on oaken floor did settle,
With mighty din of ponderous metal."

"Nay, father," said Matilda, taking the baron's hand, "do not harm the friar: he means not to offend you. My gaiety never before displeased you. Least of all should it do so now, when I have need of all my spirits to outweigh the severity of my fortune."

As she spoke the last words, tears started into her eyes, which, as if ashamed of the involuntary betraying of her feelings, she turned away to conceal. The baron was subdued at once. He kissed his daughter, held out his hand to the friar, and said, "Sing on, in God's name, and crack away the flasks till your voice swims in canary." Then turning to Sir Ralph, he said, "You see how it is, sir knight. Matilda is my daughter; but she has me in leading-strings, that is the truth of it."

CHAPTER V

"'Tis true, no lover has that power
To enforce a desperate amour,
As he that has two strings to his bow,
And burns for love and money too."—BUTLER.

THE friar had often had experience of the baron's testy humour; but it had always before confined itself to words, in which the habit of testiness often mingled more expression of displeasure than the internal feeling prompted. He knew the baron to be hot and choleric, but at the same time hospitable and generous; passionately fond of his daughter, often thwarting her in seeming, but always yielding to her in fact. The early attachment between Matilda and the Earl of Huntingdon had given the baron no serious reason to interfere with her habits and pursuits, which were so congenial to those of her lover; and not being overburdened with orthodoxy, that is to say, not being seasoned with more of the salt of the spirit than was necessary to preserve him from excommunication, confiscation, and philotheoparoptesism, he was not sorry to encourage his daughter's choice of her confessor in brother Michael, who had more jollity and less hypocrisy than any of his fraternity, and was very little anxious to disguise his love of the good things of this world under the semblance of a sanctified exterior. The friar and Matilda had often sung duets together, and had been accustomed to the baron's chiming in with a stormy *capriccio*, which was usually charmed into silence by some sudden turn in the witching melodies of Matilda. They had therefore naturally calculated, as far as their wild spirits calculated at all, on the same effects from the same causes. But the circumstances of the preceding day had made an

Philotheoparoptesism.—Roasting by a slow fire for the love of God.

essential alteration in the case. The baron knew well, from the intelligence he had received, that the earl's offence was past remission: which would have been of less moment but for the awful fact of his castle being in the possession of the king's forces, and in those days possession was considerably more than eleven points of the law. The baron was therefore convinced that the earl's outlawry was infallible, and that Matilda must either renounce her lover, or become with him an outlaw and a fugitive. In proportion, therefore, to the baron's knowledge of the strength and duration of her attachment, was his fear of the difficulty of its ever being overcome: her love of the forest and the chase, which he had never before discouraged, now presented itself to him as matter of serious alarm; and if her cheerfulness gave him hope on the one hand by indicating a spirit superior to all disappointments, it was suspicious to him on the other, as arising from some latent certainty of being soon united to the earl. All these circumstances concurred to render their songs of the vanished deer and greenwood archery and Yoicks and Harkaway, extremely *mal à propos*, and to make his anger boil and bubble in the cauldron of his spirit, till its more than ordinary excitement burst forth with sudden impulse into active manifestation.

> "But as it sometimes happens, from the might
> Of *rage* in minds that can no farther go,
> As high as they have mounted in *despite*,
> In their *remission* do they sink as low,
> To *our bold baron* did it happen so." *

For his discobolic exploit proved the climax of his rage, and was succeeded by an immediate sense that he had passed the bounds of legitimate passion; and he sunk immediately from the very pinnacle of opposition to

* Of these lines all that is not in italics belongs to Mr. Wordsworth: *Resolution and Independence.*

the level of implicit acquiescence. The friar's spirits were not to be marred by such a little incident. He was half-inclined, at first, to return the baron's compliment; but his love of Matilda checked him; and when the baron held out his hand, the friar seized it cordially, and they drowned all recollections of the affair by pledging each other in a cup of canary.

The friar, having stayed long enough to see every thing replaced on a friendly footing, rose, and moved to take his leave. Matilda told him he must come again on the morrow, for she had a very long confession to make to him. This the friar promised to do, and departed with the knight.

Sir Ralph, on reaching the abbey, drew his followers together, and led them to Locksley Castle, which he found in the possession of his lieutenant; whom he again left there with a sufficient force to hold it in safe keeping in the king's name, and proceeded to London to report the results of his enterprise.

Now Henry our royal king was very wroth at the earl's evasion, and swore by Saint Thomas-à-Becket (whom he had himself translated into a saint by having him knocked on the head), that he would give the castle and lands of Locksley to the man who should bring in the earl. Hereupon ensued a process of thought in the mind of the knight. The eyes of the fair huntress of Arlingford had left a wound in his heart which only she who gave could heal. He had seen that the baron was no longer very partial to the outlawed earl, but that he still retained his old affection for the lands and castle of Locksley. Now the lands and castle were very fair things in themselves, and would be pretty appurtenances to an adventurous knight; but they would be doubly valuable as certain passports to the father's favour, which was one step towards that of the daughter, or at least towards obtaining possession of her either quietly or perforce;

for the knight was not so nice in his love as to consider the lady's free grace a *sine qua non :* and to think of being, by any means whatever, the lord of Locksley and Arlingford, and the husband of the bewitching Matilda, was to cut in the shades of futurity a vista very tempting to a soldier of fortune. He set out in high spirits with a chosen band of followers, and beat up all the country far and wide around both the Ouse and the Trent ; but fortune did not seem disposed to second his diligence, for no vestige whatever could he trace of the earl. His followers, who were only paid with the wages of hope, began to murmur and fall off ; for, as those unenlightened days were ignorant of the happy invention of paper machinery, by which one promise to pay is satisfactorily paid with another promise to pay, and that again with another in infinite series, they would not, as their wiser posterity has done, take those tenders for true pay which were not sterling ; so that, one fine morning, the knight found himself sitting on a pleasant bank of the Trent, with only a solitary squire, who still clung to the shadow of preferment, because he did not see at the moment any better chance of the substance.

The knight did not despair because of the desertion of his followers : he was well aware that he could easily raise recruits if he could once find trace of his game ; he, therefore, rode about indefatigably over hill and dale, to the great sharpening of his own appetite and that of his squire, living gallantly from inn to inn when his purse was full, and quartering himself in the king's name on the nearest ghostly brotherhood when it happened to be empty. An autumn and a winter had passed away, when the course of his perlustrations brought him one evening into a beautiful sylvan valley where he found a number of young women weaving garlands of flowers, and singing over their pleasant occupation. He approached them, and courteously inquired the way to the nearest town.

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"There is no town within several miles," was the answer.

"A village, then, if it be but large enough to furnish an inn?"

"There is Gamwell just by, but there is no inn nearer than the nearest town."

"An abbey, then?"

"There is no abbey nearer than the nearest inn."

"A house then, or a cottage, where I may obtain hospitality for the night?"

"Hospitality!" said one of the young women; "you have not far to seek for that. Do you not know that you are in the neighbourhood of Gamwell Hall?"

"So far from it," said the knight, "that I never heard the name of Gamwell Hall before."

"Never heard of Gamwell Hall?" exclaimed all the young women together, who could as soon have dreamed of his never having heard of the sky.

"Indeed, no," said Sir Ralph; "but I shall be very happy to get rid of my ignorance."

"And so shall I," said the squire; "for it seems that in this case knowledge will for once be a cure for hunger, wherewith I am grievously afflicted."

"And why are you so busy, my pretty damsels, weaving these garlands?" said the knight.

"Why, do you not know, sir," said one of the young women, "that to-morrow is Gamwell feast?"

The knight was again obliged, with all humility, to confess his ignorance.

"Oh! sir," said his informant, "then you will have something to see, that I can tell you; for we shall choose a Queen of the May, and we shall crown her with flowers, and place her in a chariot of flowers, and draw it with lines of flowers, and we shall hang all the trees with flowers, and we shall strew all the ground with flowers, and we shall dance with flowers, and in flowers, and on flowers, and we shall be all flowers."

"That you will," said the knight; "and the sweetest

and brightest of all the flowers of the May, my pretty damsels." On which all the pretty damsels smiled at him and each other.

"And there will be all sorts of May-games, and there will be prizes for archery, and there will be the knights' ale, and the foresters' venison, and there will be Kit Scrapesqueak with his fiddle, and little Tom Whistlerap with his fife and tabor, and Sam Trumtwang with his harp, and Peter Muggledrone with his bagpipe, and how I shall dance with Will Whitethorn!" added the girl, clapping her hands as she spoke, and bounding from the ground with the pleasure of the anticipation.

A tall athletic young man approached, to whom the rustic maidens courtesied with great respect; and one of them informed Sir Ralph that it was young Master William Gamwell. The young gentleman invited and conducted the knight to the hall, where he introduced him to the old knight his father, and to the old lady his mother, and to the young lady his sister, and to a number of bold yeomen, who were laying siege to beef, brawn, and plum-pie around a ponderous table, and taking copious draughts of old October. A motto was inscribed over the interior door,—

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY:

an injunction which Sir Ralph and his squire showed remarkable alacrity in obeying. Old Sir Guy of Gamwell gave Sir Ralph a very cordial welcome, and entertained him during supper with several of his best stories, enforced with an occasional slap on the back, and pointed with a peg in the ribs; a species of vivacious eloquence in which the old gentleman excelled, and which is supposed by many of that pleasant variety of the human species, known by the name of choice fellows and comical dogs, to be the genuine tangible shape of the cream of a good joke.

CHAPTER VI

"What! shall we have incision? shall we embrew?"—*Henry IV.*

Old Sir Guy of Gamwell, and young William Gamwell, and fair Alice Gamwell, and Sir Ralph Montfaucon and his squire, rode together the next morning to the scene of the feast. They arrived on a village-green, surrounded with cottages peeping from among the trees by which the green was completely encircled. The whole circle was hung round with one continuous garland of flowers, depending in irregular festoons from the branches. In the centre of the green was a Maypole hidden in boughs and garlands; and a multitude of round-faced bumpkins and cherry-cheeked lasses were dancing around it, to the quadruple melody of Scrapesqueak, Whistlerap, Trumtwang, and Muggledrone: harmony we must not call it; for, though they had agreed to a partnership in point of tune, each, like a true painstaking man, seemed determined to have his time to himself: Muggledrone played *allegretto*, Trumtwang *allegro*, Whistlerap *presto*, and Scrapesqueak *prestissimo*. There was a kind of mathematical proportion in their discrepancy: while Muggledrone played the tune four times, Trumtwang played it five, Whistlerap six, and Scrapesqueak eight; for the latter completely distanced all his competitors, and indeed worked his elbow so nimbly that its outline was scarcely distinguishable through the mistiness of its rapid vibration.

While the knight was delighting his eyes and ears with these pleasant sights and sounds, all eyes were turned in one direction; and Sir Ralph, looking round, saw a fair lady in green and gold come riding through the trees, accompanied by a portly friar in grey, and several fair damsels and gallant grooms. On their

nearer approach he recognized the lady Matilda and her ghostly adviser, brother Michael. A party of foresters arrived from another direction, and then ensued cordial interchanges of greeting, and collisions of hands and lips, among the Gamwells and the newcomers,—"How does my fair coz, Mawd?" and "How does my sweet coz, Mawd?" and "How does my wild coz, Mawd?" "And Eh! jolly friar, your hand, old boy:" and "Here, honest friar:" and "To me, merry friar:" and "By your favour, mistress Alice:" and "Hey! cousin Robin:" and "Hey! cousin Will:" and "Od's life! merry Sir Guy, you grow younger every year,"—as the old knight shook them all in turn with one hand, and slapped them on the back with the other, in token of his affection. A number of young men and women advanced, some drawing, and others dancing round, a floral car; and having placed a crown of flowers on Matilda's head, they saluted her Queen of the May, and drew her to the place appointed for the rural sports.

A hogshead of ale was abroach under an oak, and a fire was blazing in an open space before the trees to roast the fat deer which the foresters brought. The sports commenced; and, after an agreeable series of bowling, coiting, pitching, hurling, racing, leaping, grinning, wrestling or friendly dislocation of joints, and cudgel-playing or amicable cracking of skulls, the trial of archery ensued. The conqueror was to be rewarded with a golden arrow from the hand of the Queen of the May, who was to be his partner in the dance till the close of the feast. This stimulated the knight's emulation: young Gamwell supplied him with a bow and arrow, and he took his station among the foresters, but had the mortification to be out-shot by them all, and to see one of them lodge the point of his arrow in the golden ring of the centre, and receive the prize from the hand of the beautiful Matilda, who smiled on him with particular grace. The jealous

knight scrutinized the successful champion with great attention, and surely thought he had seen that face before. In the meantime the forester led the lady to the station. The luckless Sir Ralph drank deep draughts of love from the matchless grace of her attitudes, as, taking the bow in her left hand, and adjusting the arrow with her right, advancing her left foot, and gently curving her beautiful figure with a slight motion of her head that waved her black feathers and her ringleted hair, she drew the arrow to its head, and loosed it from her open fingers. The arrow struck within the ring of gold, so close to that of the victorious forester that the points were in contact, and the feathers were intermingled. Great acclamations succeeded, and the forester led Matilda to the dance. Sir Ralph gazed on her fascinating motions till the torments of baffled love and jealous rage became unendurable ; and approaching young Gamwell, he asked him if he knew the name of that forester who was leading the dance with the Queen of the May ?

" Robin, I believe," said young Gamwell carelessly ; " I think they call him Robin."

" Is that all you know of him ? " said Sir Ralph.

" What more should I know of him ? " said young Gamwell.

" Then I can tell you," said Sir Ralph, " he is the outlawed Earl of Huntingdon, on whose head is set so large a price."

" Ay, is he ? " said young Gamwell, in the same careless manner.

" He were a prize worth the taking," said Sir Ralph.

" No doubt," said young Gamwell.

" How think you ? " said Sir Ralph : " are the foresters his adherents ? "

" I cannot say," said young Gamwell.

" Is your peasantry loyal and well-disposed ? " said Sir Ralph.

" Passing loyal," said young Gamwell.

"If I should call on them in the king's name," said Sir Ralph, "think you they would aid and assist?"

"Most likely they would," said young Gamwell, "one side or the other."

"Ay, but which side?" said the knight.

"That remains to be tried," said young Gamwell.

"I have King Henry's commission," said the knight, "to apprehend this earl that was. How would you advise me to act, being, as you see, without attendant force?"

"I would advise you," said young Gamwell, "to take yourself off without delay, unless you would relish the taste of a volley of arrows, a shower of stones, and a hailstorm of cudgel-blows, which would not be turned aside by a God save King Henry."

Sir Ralph's squire no sooner heard this, and saw by the looks of the speaker that he was not likely to prove a false prophet, than he clapped spurs to his horse and galloped off with might and main. This gave the knight a good excuse to pursue him, which he did with great celerity, calling, "Stop, you rascal." When the squire fancied himself safe out of the reach of pursuit, he checked his speed, and allowed the knight to come up with him. They rode on several miles in silence, till they discovered the towers and spires of Nottingham, where the knight introduced himself to the sheriff and demanded an armed force to assist in the apprehension of the outlawed Earl of Huntingdon. The sheriff, who was willing to have his share of the prize, determined to accompany the knight in person, and regaled him and his man with good store of the best; after which, they, with a stout retinue of fifty men, took the way to Gamwell feast.

"God's my life," said the sheriff, as they rode along, "I had as lief you would tell me of a service of plate. I much doubt if this outlawed earl, this forester Robin, be not the man they call Robin Hood, who has quartered himself in Sherwood Forest, and whom in

endeavouring to apprehend I have fallen divers times into disasters. He has gotten together a band of disinherited prodigals, outlawed debtors, excommunicated heretics, elder sons that have spent all they had, and younger sons that never had any thing to spend ; and with these he kills the king's deer, and plunders wealthy travellers of five-sixths of their money ; but if they be abbots or bishops, them he despoils utterly."

The sheriff then proceeded to relate to his companion the adventure of the abbot of Doubleflask (which some grave historians have related of the abbot of Saint Mary's, and others of the bishop of Hereford) : how the abbot, returning to his abbey in company with his high selerer, who carried in his portmanteau the rents of the abbey-lands, and with a numerous train of attendants, came upon four seeming peasants, who were roasting the king's venison by the king's highway : how, in just indignation at this flagrant infringement of the forest laws, he asked them what they meant, and they answered that they meant to dine : how he ordered them to be seized and bound, and led captive to Nottingham, that they might know wild-flesh to have been destined by Providence for licensed and privileged appetites, and not for the base hunger of unqualified knaves : how they prayed for mercy, and how the abbot swore by Saint Charity that he would show them none : how one of them thereupon drew a bugle-horn from under his smock-frock and blew three blasts, on which the abbot and his train were instantly surrounded by sixty bowmen in green : how they tied him to a tree, and made him say mass for their sins : how they unbound him, and sate him down with them to dinner, and gave him venison and wild-fowl and wine, and made him pay for his fare all the money in his high selerer's portmanteau, and enforced him to sleep all night under a tree in his cloak, and to leave the cloak behind him in the morning : how the abbot, light in pocket and heavy in heart, raised the country

upon Robin Hood, for so he had heard the chief forester called by his men, and hunted him into an old woman's cottage: how Robin changed dresses with the old woman, and how the abbot rode in great triumph into Nottingham, having in custody an old woman in a green doublet and breeches: how the old woman discovered herself: how the merrymen of Nottingham laughed at the abbot: how the abbot railed at the old woman, and how the old woman outrailed the abbot, telling him that Robin had given her food and fire through the winter, which no abbot would ever do, but would rather take it from her for what he called the good of the church, by which he meant his own laziness and gluttony; and that she knew a true man from a false thief, and a free forester from a greedy abbot.

"Thus you see," added the sheriff, "how this villain perverts the deluded people by making them believe that those who tithe and toll upon them for their spiritual and temporal benefit are not their best friends and fatherly guardians; for he holds that in giving to boors and old women what he takes from priests and peers, he does but restore to the former what the latter had taken from them; and this the impudent varlet calls distributive justice. Judge now if any loyal subject can be safe in such neighbourhood."

While the sheriff was thus enlightening his companion concerning the offenders, and whetting his own indignation against them, the sun was fast sinking to the west. They rode on till they came in view of a bridge, which they saw a party approaching from the opposite side, and the knight presently discovered that the party consisted of the lady Matilda and friar Michael, young Gamwell, cousin Robin, and about half-a-dozen foresters. The knight pointed out the earl to the sheriff, who exclaimed, "Here, then, we have him an easy prey;" and they rode on manfully towards the bridge, on which the other party made halt.

"Who be these," said the friar, "that come riding so fast this way? Now, as God shall judge me, it is that false knight Sir Ralph Montfaucon, and the sheriff of Nottingham, with a posse of men. We must make good our post, and let them dislodge us if they may."

The two parties were now near enough to parley; and the sheriff and the knight, advancing in the front of the cavalcade, called on the lady, the friar, young Gamwell, and the foresters, to deliver up that false traitor, Robert, formerly Earl of Huntingdon. Robert himself made answer by letting fly an arrow that struck the ground between the fore feet of the sheriff's horse. The horse reared up from the whizzing, and lodged the sheriff in the dust; and, at the same time, the fair Matilda favoured the knight with an arrow in his right arm, that compelled him to withdraw from the affray. His men lifted the sheriff carefully up, and replaced him on his horse, whom he immediately with great rage and zeal urged on to the assault with his fifty men at his heels, some of whom were intercepted in their advance by the arrows of the foresters and Matilda; while the friar, with an eight-foot staff, dislodged the sheriff a second time, and laid on him with all the vigour of the church militant on earth, in spite of his ejaculations of "Hey, friar Michael! What means this, honest friar? Hold, ghostly friar! Hold, holy friar!"—till Matilda interposed, and delivered the battered sheriff to the care of the foresters. The friar continued flourishing his staff among the sheriff's men, knocking down one, breaking the ribs of another, dislocating the shoulder of a third, flattening the nose of a fourth, cracking the skull of a fifth, and pitching a sixth into the river, till the few, who were lucky enough to escape with whole bones, clapped spurs to their horses and fled for their lives, under a farewell volley of arrows.

Sir Ralph's squire, meanwhile, was glad of the excuse of attending his master's wound to absent himself from the battle; and put the poor knight to a great deal of

unnecessary pain by making as long a business as possible of extracting the arrow, which he had not accomplished when Matilda, approaching, extracted it with great facility, and bound up the wound with her scarf, saying, "I reclaim my arrow, sir knight, which struck where I aimed it, to admonish you to desist from your enterprise. I could as easily have lodged it in your heart."

"It did not need," said the knight, with rueful gallantry; "you have lodged one there already."

"If you mean to say that you love me," said Matilda, "it is more than I ever shall you: but if you will show your love by no further interfering with mine, you will at least merit my gratitude."

The knight made a wry face under the double pain of heart and body caused at the same moment by the material or martial, and the metaphorical or erotic arrow, of which the latter was thus barbed by a declaration more candid than flattering; but he did not choose to put in any such claim to the lady's gratitude as would bar all hopes of her love: he therefore remained silent; and the lady and her escort, leaving him and the sheriff to the care of the squire, rode on till they came in sight of Arlingford Castle, when they parted in several directions. The friar rode off alone; and after the foresters had lost sight of him they heard his voice through the twilight, singing,—

"A staff, a staff, of a young oak graff,
That is both stoure and stiff,
Is all a good friar can needs desire
To shrive a proud sheriffe.
And thou, fine fellòwe, who has tasted so
Of the forester's greenwood game,
Wilt be in no haste thy time to waste
In seeking more taste of the same:
Or this can I read thee, and riddle thee well,
Thou hadst better by far be the devil in hell,
Than the sheriff of Nottinghàme."

CHAPTER VII

"Now, master sheriff, what's your will with me?"—*Henry IV.*

MATILDA had carried her point with the baron of ranging at liberty whithersoever she would, under her positive promise to return home; she was a sort of prisoner on parole: she had obtained this indulgence by means of an obsolete habit of always telling the truth and keeping her word, which our enlightened age has discarded with other barbarisms, but which had the effect of giving her father so much confidence in her, that he could not help considering her word a better security than locks and bars.

The baron had been one of the last to hear of the rumours of the new outlaws of Sherwood, as Matilda had taken all possible precautions to keep those rumours from his knowledge, fearing that they might cause the interruption of her greenwood liberty; and it was only during her absence at Gamwell feast, that the butler, being thrown off his guard by liquor, forgot her injunctions, and regaled the baron with a long story of the right merry adventure of Robin Hood and the abbot of Doubleflask.

The baron was one morning, as usual, cutting his way valorously through a rampart of cold provision, when his ears were suddenly assailed by a tremendous alarum, and sallying forth, and looking from his castle wall, he perceived a large party of armed men on the other side of the moat, who were calling on the warder in the king's name to lower the drawbridge and raise the portcullis, which had both been secured by Matilda's order. The baron walked along the battlement till he came opposite to these unexpected visitors, who, as soon as they saw him, called out, "Lower the drawbridge, in the king's name."

"For what, in the devil's name?" said the baron.

"The sheriff of Nottingham," said one, "lies in bed grievously bruised, and many of his men are wounded, and several of them slain; and Sir Ralph Montfaucon, knight, is sore wounded in the arm; and we are charged to apprehend William Gamwell the younger, of Gamwell Hall, and father Michael of Rubygill Abbey, and Matilda Fitzwater of Arlingford Castle, as agents and accomplices in the said breach of the king's peace."

"Breach of the king's fiddlestick!" answered the baron. "What do you mean by coming here with your cock and bull stories of my daughter grievously bruising the sheriff of Nottingham? You are a set of vagabond rascals in disguise; and I hear, by the bye, there is a gang of thieves that has just set up business in Sherwood Forest; a pretty pretence, indeed, to get into my castle with force and arms, and make a famine in my buttery, and a drought in my cellar, and a void in my strong box, and a vacuum in my silver scullery."

"Lord Fitzwater," cried one, "take heed how you resist lawful authority: we will prove ourselves——"

"You will prove yourselves arrant knaves, I doubt not," answered the baron; "but, villains, you shall be more grievously bruised by me than ever was the sheriff by my daughter (a pretty tale truly!), if you do not forthwith avoid my territory."

By this time the baron's men had flocked to the battlements, with long-bows and cross-bows, slings and stones, and Matilda with her bow and quiver at their head. The assailants, finding the castle so well defended, deemed it expedient to withdraw till they could return in greater force, and rode off to Rubygill Abbey, where they made known their errand to the father abbot, who, having satisfied himself of their legitimacy, and conned over the allegations, said that doubtless brother Michael had heinously offended; but it was not for the civil law to take cognizance of the misdoings of a holy friar; that he would summon

a chapter of monks, and pass on the offender a sentence proportionate to his offence. The ministers of civil justice said that would not do. The abbot said it would do and should; and bade them not provoke the meekness of his catholic charity to lay them under the curse of Rome. This threat had its effect, and the party rode off to Gamwell Hall, where they found the Gamwells and their men just sitting down to dinner, which they saved them the trouble of eating by consuming it in the king's name themselves, having first seized and bound young Gamwell; all which they accomplished by dint of superior numbers, in despite of a most vigorous stand made by the Gamwellites in defence of their young master and their provisions.

The baron, meanwhile, after the ministers of justice had departed, interrogated Matilda concerning the alleged fact of the grievous bruising of the sheriff of Nottingham. Matilda told him the whole history of Gamwell feast, and of their battle on the bridge, which had its origin in a design of the sheriff of Nottingham to take one of the foresters into custody.

"Ay! ay!" said the baron, "and I guess who that forester was; but truly this friar is a desperate fellow. I did not think there could have been so much valour under a grey frock. And so you wounded the knight in the arm. You are a wild girl, Mawd,—a chip of the old block, Mawd. A wild girl, and a wild friar, and three or four foresters, wild lads all, to keep a bridge against a tame knight, and a tame sheriff, and fifty tame varlets; by this light, the like was never heard! But do you know, Mawd, you must not go about so any more, sweet Mawd: you must stay at home, you must ensconce; for there is your tame sheriff on the one hand, that will take you perforce; and there is your wild forester on the other hand, that will take you without any force at all, Mawd: your wild forester, Robin, cousin Robin, Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest, that beats and binds bishops, spreads nets for arch-

bishops, and hunts a fat abbot as if he were a buck: excellent game, no doubt, but you must hunt no more in such company. I see it now: truly I might have guessed before that the bold outlaw Robin, the most courteous Robin, the new thief of Sherwood Forest, was your lover, the earl that has been: I might have guessed it before, and what led you so much to the woods; but you hunt no more in such company. No more May games and Gamwell feasts. My lands and castle would be the forfeit of a few more such pranks; and I think they are as well in my hands as the king's, quite as well."

"You know, father," said Matilda, "the condition of keeping me at home: I get out if I can, and not on parole."

"Ay! ay!" said the baron, "if you can; very true: watch and ward, Mawd, watch and ward is my word: if you can, is yours. The mark is set, and so start fair."

The baron would have gone on in this way for an hour; but the friar made his appearance with a long oak staff in his hand, singing,—

> "Drink and sing, and eat and laugh,
> And so go forth to battle:
> For the top of a skull and the end of a staff
> Do make a ghostly rattle."

"Ho! ho! friar!" said the baron—"singing friar, laughing friar, roaring friar, fighting friar, hacking friar, thwacking friar; cracking, cracking, cracking friar; joke-cracking, bottle-cracking, skull-cracking friar!"

"And ho! ho!" said the friar,—"bold baron, old baron, sturdy baron, wordy baron, long baron, strong baron, mighty baron, flighty baron, mazed baron, crazed baron, hacked baron, thwacked baron; cracked cracked, cracked baron; bone-cracked, sconce-cracked, brain-cracked baron!"

" What do you mean," said the baron, " bully friar, by calling me hacked and thwacked ? "

" Were you not in the wars ? " said the friar, " where he who escapes unhacked does more credit to his heels than his arms. I pay tribute to your valour in calling you hacked and thwacked."

" I never was thwacked in my life," said the baron " I stood my ground manfully, and covered my body with my sword. If I had had the luck to meet with a fighting friar indeed, I might have been thwacked, and soundly too ; but I hold myself a match for any two laymen ; it takes nine fighting laymen to make a fighting friar."

" Whence come you now, holy father ? " asked Matilda.

" From Rubygill Abbey," said the friar, " whither I never return :

> " For I must seek some hermit cell,
> Where I alone my beads may tell,
> And on the wight who that way fares
> Levy a toll for my ghostly pray'rs,
> Levy a toll, levy a toll,
> Levy a toll for my ghostly pray'rs."

" What is the matter then, father ? " said Matilda.

" This is the matter," said the friar : " my holy brethren have held a chapter on me, and sentenced me to seven years' privation of wine. I therefore deemed it fitting to take my departure, which they would fain have prohibited. I was enforced to clear the way with my staff. I have grievously beaten my dearly beloved brethren : I grieve thereat ; but they enforced me thereto. I have beaten them much ; I mowed them down to the right and to the left, and left them like an ill-reaped field of wheat, ear and straw pointing all ways, scattered in singleness and jumbled in masses ; and so bade them farewell, saying, Peace be with you. But I must not tarry, lest danger be in my

rear: therefore, farewell, sweet Matilda; and farewell, noble baron; and farewell, sweet Matilda again, the alpha and omega of father Michael, the first and the last."

"Farewell, father," said the baron, a little softened; "and God send you be never assailed by more than fifty men at a time."

"Amen," said the friar, "to that good wish."

"And we shall meet again, father, I trust," said Matilda.

"When the storm is blown over," said the baron.

"Doubt it not," said the friar, "though flooded Trent were between us, and fifty devils guarded the bridge."

He kissed Matilda's forehead, and walked away without a song.

CHAPTER VIII

"Let gallows gape for dog: let man go free."—*Henry V.*

A PAGE had been brought up in Gamwell Hall, who, while he was little, had been called Little John, and continued to be so called after he had grown to be a foot taller than any other man in the house. He was full seven feet high. His latitude was worthy of his longitude, and his strength was worthy of both; and though an honest man by profession, he had practised archery on the king's deer for the benefit of his master's household, and for the improvement of his own eye and hand, till his aim had become infallible within the range of two miles. He had fought manfully in defence of his young master, took his captivity exceedingly to heart, and fell into bitter grief and boundless rage when he heard that he had been tried in Nottingham and sentenced to die. Alice Gamwell, at Little John's request, wrote three letters of one tenour; and Little John, having attached them to three blunt

arrows, saddled the fleetest steed in old Sir Guy of Gamwell's stables, mounted, and rode first to Arlingford Castle, where he shot one of the three arrows over the battlements; then to Rubygill Abbey, where he shot the second into the abbey-garden; then back past Gamwell Hall to the borders of Sherwood Forest, where he shot the third into the wood. Now the first of these arrows lighted in the nape of the neck of Lord Fitzwater, and lodged itself firmly between his skin and his collar; the second rebounded with the hollow vibration of a drumstick from the shaven sconce of the abbot of Rubygill; and the third pitched perpendicularly into the centre of a venison pasty in which Robin Hood was making incision.

Matilda ran up to her father in the court of Arlingford Castle, seized the arrow, drew off the letter, and concealed it in her bosom before the baron had time to look round, which he did with many expressions of rage against the impudent villain who had shot a blunt arrow into the nape of his neck.

"But you know, father," said Matilda, "a sharp arrow in the same place would have killed you; therefore the sending a blunt one was very considerate."

"Considerate, with a vengeance!" said the baron. "Where was the consideration of sending it at all? This is some of your forester's pranks. He has missed you in the forest, since I have kept watch and ward over you, and by way of a love-token and a remembrance to you takes a random shot at me."

The abbot of Rubygill picked up the missile-missive or messenger arrow, which had rebounded from his shaven crown, with a very unghostly malediction on the sender, which he suddenly checked with a pious and consolatory reflection on the goodness of Providence in having blessed him with such a thickness of skull, to which he was now indebted for temporal preservation, as he had before been for spiritual promotion. He opened the letter, which was addressed to

father Michael, and found it to contain an intimation that William Gamwell was to be hanged on Monday at Nottingham.

"And I wish," said the abbot, "father Michael were to be hanged with him: an ungrateful monster, after I had rescued him from the fangs of civil justice, to reward my lenity by not leaving a bone unbruised among the holy brotherhood of Rubygill."

Robin Hood extracted from his venison pasty a similar intimation of the evil destiny of his cousin, whom he determined, if possible, to rescue from the jaws of Cerberus.

The sheriff of Nottingham, though still sore with his bruises, was so intent on revenge, that he raised himself from his bed to attend the execution of William Gamwell. He rode to the august structure of retributive Themis, as the French call a gallows, in all the pride and pomp of shrievalty, and with a splendid retinue of well-equipped knaves and varlets, as our ancestors called honest serving-men.

Young Gamwell was brought forth with his arms pinioned behind him; his sister Alice and his father, Sir Guy, attending him in disconsolate mood. He had rejected the confessor provided by the sheriff, and had insisted on the privilege of choosing his own, whom Little John had promised to bring. Little John, however, had not made his appearance when the fatal procession began its march; but when they reached the place of execution, Little John appeared, accompanied by a ghostly friar.

"Sheriff," said young Gamwell, "let me not die with my hands pinioned: give me a sword, and set any odds of your men against me, and let me die the death of a man, like the descendant of a noble house, which has never yet been stained with ignominy."

"No, no," said the sheriff; "I have had enough of setting odds against you. I have sworn you shall be hanged, and hanged you shall be."

"Then God have mercy on me," said young Gamwell; "and now, holy friar, shrive my sinful soul."

The friar approached.

"Let me see this friar," said the sheriff: "if he be the friar of the bridge, I had as lief have the devil in Nottingham; but he shall find me too much for him here."

"The friar of the bridge," said Little John, "as you very well know, sheriff, was father Michael of Rubygill Abbey, and you may easily see that this is not the man."

"I see it," said the sheriff; "and God be thanked for his absence."

Young Gamwell stood at the foot of the ladder. The friar approached him, opened his book, groaned, turned up the whites of his eyes, tossed up his arms in the air, and said "*Dominus vobiscum.*" He then crossed both his hands on his breast under the folds of his holy robes, and stood a few moments as if in inward prayer. A deep silence among the attendant crowd accompanied this action of the friar; interrupted only by the hollow tone of the death-bell, at long and dreary intervals. Suddenly the friar threw off his holy robes, and appeared a forester clothed in green, with a sword in his right hand and a horn in his left. With the sword he cut the bonds of William Gamwell, who instantly snatched a sword from one of the sheriff's men; and with the horn he blew a loud blast, which was answered at once by four bugles from the quarters of the four winds, and from each quarter came five-and-twenty bowmen running all on a row.

"Treason! treason!" cried the sheriff. Old Sir Guy sprang to his son's side, and so did Little John; and the four setting back to back, kept the sheriff and his men at bay till the bowmen came within shot and let fly their arrows among the sheriff's men, who, after a brief resistance, fled in all directions. The forester, who had personated the friar, sent an arrow after the

flying sheriff, calling with a strong voice, "To the sheriff's left arm, as a keepsake from Robin Hood." The arrow reached its destiny; the sheriff redoubled his speed, and, with the one arrow in his arm, did not stop to breathe till he was out of reach of another.

The foresters did not waste time in Nottingham, but were soon at a distance from its walls. Sir Guy returned with Alice to Gamwell Hall; but thinking he should not be safe there, from the share he had had in his son's rescue, they only remained long enough to supply themselves with clothes and money, and departed, under the escort of Little John, to another seat of the Gamwells in Yorkshire. Young Gamwell, taking it for granted that his offence was past remission, determined on joining Robin Hood, and accompanied him to the forest, where it was deemed expedient that he should change his name; and he was rechristened without a priest, and with wine instead of water, by the immortal name of Scarlet.

CHAPTER IX

"Who set my man i' the stocks?——
I set him there, Sir: but his own disorders
Deserved much less advancement."—*Lear.*

THE baron was inflexible in his resolution not to let Matilda leave the castle. The letter, which announced to her the approaching fate of young Gamwell, filled her with grief, and increased the irksomeness of a privation which already preyed sufficiently on her spirits, and began to undermine her health. She had no longer the consolation of the society of her old friend father Michael: the little fat friar of Rubygill was substituted as the castle confessor, not without some misgivings in his ghostly bosom; but he was more

allured by the sweet savour of the good things of this world at Arlingford Castle, than deterred by his awe of the lady Matilda, which nevertheless was so excessive, from his recollection of the twang of the bow-string, that he never ventured to find her in the wrong, much less to enjoin anything in the shape of penance, as was the occasional practice of holy confessors, with or without cause, for the sake of pious discipline, and what was in those days called social order, namely, the preservation of the privileges of the few who happened to have any, at the expense of the swinish multitude who happened to have none, except that of working and being shot at for the benefit of their betters, which is obviously not the meaning of social order in our more enlightened times: let us therefore be grateful to Providence, and sing *Te Deum laudamus* in chorus with the Holy Alliance.

The little friar, however, though he found the lady spotless, found the butler a great sinner: at least so it was conjectured, from the length of time he always took to confess him in the buttery.

Matilda became every day more pale and dejected: her spirit, which could have contended against any strenuous affliction, pined in the monotonous inaction to which she was condemned. While she could freely range the forest with her lover in the morning, she had been content to return to her father's castle in the evening, thus preserving underanged the balance of her duties, habits, and affections; not without a hope that the repeal of her lover's outlawry might be eventually obtained, by a judicious distribution of some of his forest spoils among the holy fathers and saints-that-were-to-be,—pious proficients in the ecclesiastic art equestrian, who rode the conscience of King Henry with double-curb bridles, and kept it well in hand when it showed mettle and seemed inclined to rear and plunge. But the affair at Gamwell feast threw many additional difficulties in the way of the accom-

plishment of this hope; and very shortly afterwards King Henry the Second went to make up in the next world his quarrel with Thomas-à-Becket; and Richard Cœur-de-Lion made all England resound with preparations for the crusade, to the great delight of many zealous adventurers, who eagerly flocked under his banner in the hope of enriching themselves with Saracen spoil, which they called fighting the battles of God. Richard, who was not remarkably scrupulous in his financial operations, was not likely to overlook the lands and castle of Locksley, which he appropriated immediately to his own purposes, and sold to the highest bidder. Now, as the repeal of the outlawry would involve the restitution of the estates to the rightful owner, it was obvious that it could never be expected from that most legitimate and most Christian king, Richard the First of England, the arch-crusader and anti-jacobin by excellence,—the very type, flower, cream, pink, symbol, and mirror of all the Holy Alliances that have ever existed on earth, excepting that he seasoned his superstition and love of conquest with a certain condiment of romantic generosity and chivalrous self-devotion, with which his imitators in all other points have found it convenient to dispense. To give freely to one man what he had taken forcibly from another, was generosity of which he was very capable; but to restore what he had taken to the man from whom he had taken it, was something that wore too much of the cool physiognomy of justice to be easily reconcilable to his kingly feelings. He had, besides, not only sent all King Henry's saints about their business, or rather about their no-business—their *fainéantise*—but he had laid them under rigorous contribution for the purposes of his holy war; and having made them refund to the piety of the successor what they had extracted from the piety of the precursor, he compelled them, in addition, to give him their blessing for nothing. Matilda, there-

fore, from all these circumstances, felt little hope that her lover would be anything but an outlaw for life.

The departure of King Richard from England was succeeded by the episcopal regency of the bishops of Ely and Durham. Longchamp, bishop of Ely, proceeded to show his sense of Christian fellowship by arresting his brother bishop, and despoiling him of his share in the government; and to set forth his humility and loving-kindness in a retinue of nobles and knights who consumed in one night's entertainment some five years' revenue of their entertainer, and in a guard of fifteen hundred foreign soldiers, whom he considered indispensable to the exercise of a vigour beyond the law in maintaining wholesome discipline over the refractory English. The ignorant impatience of the swinish multitude with these fruits of good living, brought forth by one of the meek who had inherited the earth, displayed itself in a general ferment, of which Prince John took advantage to make the experiment of getting possession of his brother's crown in his absence. He began by calling at Reading a council of barons, whose aspect induced the holy bishop to disguise himself (some say as an old woman, which, in the twelfth century, perhaps might have been a disguise for a bishop), and make his escape beyond sea. Prince John followed up his advantage by obtaining possession of several strong posts, and among others of the castle of Nottingham.

While John was conducting his operations at Nottingham, he rode at times past the castle of Arlingford. He stopped on one occasion to claim Lord Fitzwater's hospitality, and made most princely havoc among his venison and brawn. Now it is a matter of record among divers great historians and learned clerks, that he was then and there grievously smitten by the charms of the lovely Matilda, and that a few days after he despatched his travelling minstrel, or laureate,

Harpiton * (whom he retained at moderate wages, to keep a journal of his proceedings, and prove them all just and legitimate), to the castle of Arlingford, to make proposals to the lady. This Harpiton was a very useful person. He was always ready, not only to maintain the cause of his master with his pen, and to sing his eulogies to his harp, but to undertake at a moment's notice any kind of courtly employment, called dirty work by the profane, which the blessings of civil government, namely, his master's pleasure, and the interests of social order, namely, his own emolument, might require. In short,

> "Il eût l'emploi qui certes n'est pas mince,
> Et qu'à la cour, où tout se peint en beau,
> On appelloit être l'ami du prince ;
> Mais qu'à la ville, et surtout en province,
> Les gens grossiers ont nommé maquereau."

Prince John was of opinion that the love of a prince actual and king expectant, was in itself a sufficient honour to the daughter of a simple baron, and that the right divine of royalty would make it sufficiently holy without the rite divine of the church. He was, therefore, graciously pleased to fall into an exceeding passion, when his confidential messenger returned from his embassy in piteous plight, having been, by the baron's order, first tossed in a blanket and set in the stocks to cool, and afterwards ducked in the moat and set again in the stocks to dry. John swore to revenge horribly this flagrant outrage on royal prerogative, and to obtain possession of the lady by force of arms ; and accordingly collected a body of troops, and marched upon Arlingford Castle. A letter, conveyed as before on the point of a blunt arrow, announced his approach to Matilda : and Lord Fitzwater had just time to assemble his retainers, collect a

* Harp-it-on ; or, a *corruption* of Ερπετον, a creeping thing.

hasty supply of provision, raise the drawbridge and drop the portcullis, when the castle was surrounded by the enemy. The little fat friar, who during the confusion was asleep in the buttery, found himself, on awaking, inclosed in the besieged castle, and dolefully bewailed his evil chance.

CHAPTER X

"A noble girl, i' faith. Heart! I think I fight with a familiar, or the ghost of a fencer. Call you this an amorous visage? Here's blood that would have served me these seven years, in broken heads and cut fingers, and now it runs out all together."

MIDDLETON, *Roaring Girl.*

PRINCE JOHN sat down impatiently before Arlingford Castle in the hope of starving out the besieged; but finding the duration of their supplies extend itself in an equal ratio with the prolongation of his hope, he made vigorous preparations for carrying the place by storm. He constructed an immense machine on wheels, which, being advanced to the edge of the moat, would lower a temporary bridge, of which one end would rest on the bank and the other on the battlements, and which, being well furnished with stepping boards, would enable his men to ascend the inclined plane with speed and facility. Matilda received intimation of this design by the usual friendly channel of a blunt arrow, which must either have been sent from some secret friend in the prince's camp, or from some vigorous archer beyond it; the latter will not appear improbable, when we consider that Robin Hood and Little John could shoot two English miles and an inch point-blank,

"Come scrive Turpino, che non erra."

The machine was completed, and the ensuing morning fixed for the assault. Six men, relieved at

intervals, kept watch over it during the night. Prince John retired to sleep, congratulating himself in the expectation that another day would place the fair culprit at his princely mercy. His anticipations mingled with the visions of his slumber, and he dreamed of wounds and drums, and sacking and firing the castle, and bearing off in his arms the beautiful prize through the midst of fire and smoke. In the height of this imaginary turmoil he awoke, and conceived, for a few moments, that certain sounds which rang in his ears were the continuation of those of his dream, in that sort of half-consciousness between sleeping and waking, when reality and phantasy meet and mingle in dim and confused resemblance. He was, however, very soon fully awake to the fact of his guards calling on him to arm, which he did in haste, and beheld the machine in flames, and a furious conflict raging around it. He hurried to the spot, and found that his camp had been suddenly assailed from one side by a party of foresters, and that the baron's people had made a sortie on the other, and that they had killed the guards and set fire to the machine, before the rest of the camp could come to the assistance of their fellows.

The night was in itself intensely dark, and the firelight shed around it a vivid and unnatural radiance. On one side, the crimson light quivered by its own agitation on the waveless moat, and on the bastions and buttresses of the castle, and their shadows lay in massy blackness on the illuminated walls; on the other, it shone upon the woods, streaming far within among the open trunks, or resting on the closer foliage. The circumference of darkness bounded the scene on all sides: and in the centre raged the war; shields, helmets, and bucklers gleaming and glittering as they rang and clashed against each other; plumes confusedly tossing in the crimson light, and the massy light and shade that fell on the faces of the combatants giving additional energy to their ferocious expression.

John, drawing nearer to the scene of action, observed two young warriors fighting side by side, one of whom wore the habit of a forester, the other that of a retainer of Arlingford. He looked intently on them both : their position towards the fire favoured the scrutiny ; and the hawk's eye of love very speedily discovered that the latter was the fair Matilda. The forester he did not know : but he had sufficient tact to discern that his success would be very much facilitated by separating her from this companion, above all others. He therefore formed a party of men into a wedge, only taking especial care not to be the point of it himself, and drove it between them with so much precision, that they were in a moment far asunder.

" Lady Matilda," said John, " yield yourself my prisoner."

" If you would wear me, prince," said Matilda, " you must win me : " and without giving him time to deliberate on the courtesy of fighting with the lady of his love, she raised her sword in the air, and lowered it on his head with an impetus that would have gone nigh to fathom even that extraordinary depth of brain which always by divine grace furnishes the interior of a head-royal, if he had not very dexterously parried the blow. Prince John wished to disarm and take captive, not in any way to wound or injure, least of all to kill, his fair opponent. Matilda was only intent to get rid of her antagonist at any rate : the edge of her weapon painted his complexion with streaks of very unloverlike crimson, and she would probably have marred John's hand for ever signing Magna Charta, but that he was backed by the advantage of numbers, and that her sword broke short on the boss of his buckler. John was following up his advantage to make a captive of the lady, when he was suddenly felled to the earth by an unseen antagonist. Some of his men picked him carefully up, and conveyed him to his tent, stunned and stupefied.

When he recovered, he found Harpiton diligently assisting in his recovery, more in the fear of losing his place than in that of losing his master: the prince's first inquiry was for the prisoner he had been on the point of taking at the moment when his *habeas corpus* was so unseasonably suspended. He was told that his people had been on the point of securing the said prisoner, when the devil suddenly appeared among them in the likeness of a tall friar, having his grey frock cinctured with a sword-belt, and his crown, which whether it were shaven or no they could not see, surmounted with a helmet, and flourishing an eight-foot staff, with which he laid about him to the right and to the left, knocking down the prince and his men as if they had been so many nine-pins: in fine, he had rescued the prisoner, and made a clear passage through friend and foe, and in conjunction with a chosen party of archers, had covered the retreat of the baron's men and the foresters, who had all gone off in a body towards Sherwood Forest.

Harpiton suggested that it would be desirable to sack the castle, and volunteered to lead the van on the occasion, as the defenders were withdrawn, and the exploit seemed to promise much profit and little danger: John considered that the castle would in itself be a great acquisition to him, as a stronghold in furtherance of his design on his brother's throne; and was determining to take possession with the first light of morning, when he had the mortification to see the castle burst into flames in several places at once. A piteous cry was heard from within, and while the prince was proclaiming a reward to any one who would enter into the burning pile, and elucidate the mystery of the doleful voice, forth waddled the little fat friar in an agony of fear, out of the fire into the frying-pan; for he was instantly taken into custody and carried before Prince John, wringing his hands and tearing his hair.

" Are you the friar," said Prince John, in a terrible voice, " that laid me prostrate in battle, mowed down my men like grass, rescued my captive, and covered the retreat of my enemies ? And, not content with this, have you now set fire to the castle in which I intended to take up my royal quarters ? "

The little friar quaked like a jelly : he fell on his knees, and attempted to speak ; but in his eagerness to vindicate himself from this accumulation of alarming charges, he knew not where to begin ; his ideas rolled round upon each other like the radii of a wheel ; the words he desired to utter, instead of issuing, as it were, in a right line from his lips, seemed to conglobate themselves into a sphere turning on its own axis in his throat : after several ineffectual efforts, his utterance totally failed him, and he remained gasping, with his mouth open, his lips quivering, his hands clasped together, and the whites of his eyes turned up towards the prince with an expression most ruefully imploring.

" Are you that friar ? " repeated the prince.

Several of the bystanders declared that he was not that friar. The little friar, encouraged by this patronage, found his voice, and pleaded for mercy. The prince questioned him closely concerning the burning of the castle. The little friar declared that he had been in too great fear during the siege to know much of what was going forward, except that he had been conscious during the last few days of a lamentable deficiency of provisions, and had been present that very morning at the broaching of the last butt of sack. Harpiton groaned in sympathy. The little friar added, that he knew nothing of what had passed since, till he heard the flames roaring at his elbow.

" Take him away, Harpiton," said the prince, " fill him with sack and turn him out."

" Never mind the sack," said the little friar, " turn me out at once."

'A sad chance," said Harpiton, "to be turned out without sack."

But what Harpiton thought a sad chance the little friar thought a merry one, and went bounding like a fat buck towards the abbey of Rubygill.

An arrow, with a letter attached to it, was shot into the camp, and carried to the prince. The contents were these :—

"PRINCE JOHN,—I do not consider myself to have resisted lawful authority in defending my castle against you, seeing that you are at present in a state of active rebellion against your liege sovereign Richard : and if my provisions had not failed me, I would have maintained it till doomsday. As it is, I have so well disposed my combustibles that it shall not serve you as a stronghold in your rebellion. If you hunt in the chases of Nottinghamshire, you may catch other game than my daughter. Both she and I are content to be houseless for a time, in the reflection that we have deserved your enmity, and the friendship of Cœur-de-Lion.

"FITZWATER."

CHAPTER XI

"—Tuck, the merry friar, who many a sermon made
In praise of Robin Hood, his outlaws, and their trade."
DRAYTON.

THE baron, with some of his retainers and all the foresters, halted at daybreak in Sherwood Forest. The foresters quickly erected tents, and prepared an abundant breakfast of venison and ale.

"Now, Lord Fitzwater," said the chief forester, "recognize your son-in-law that was to have been in the outlaw Robin Hood."

" Ay, ay," said the baron, " I have recognized you long ago."

" And recognize your young friend Gamwell," said the second, " in the outlaw Scarlet."

" And Little John, the page," said the third, " in Little John the outlaw."

" And father Michael, of Rubygill Abbey," said the friar, " in Friar Tuck, of Sherwood Forest. Truly, I have a chapel here hard by, in the shape of a hollow tree, where I put up my prayers for travellers, and Little John holds the plate at the door, for good praying deserves good paying."

" I am in fine company," said the baron.

" In the very best of company," said the friar, " in the high court of Nature, and in the midst of her own nobility. Is it not so? This goodly grove is our palace: the oak and the beech are its colonnade and its canopy: the sun and the moon and the stars are its everlasting lamps: the grass, and the daisy, and the primrose, and the violet, are its many-coloured floor of green, white, yellow, and blue; the mayflower, and the woodbine, and the eglantine, and the ivy, are its decorations, its curtains, and its tapestry: the lark, and the thrush, and the linnet, and the nightingale, are its unhired minstrels and musicians. Robin Hood is king of the forest both by dignity of birth and by virtue of his standing army: to say nothing of the free choice of his people, which he has indeed, but I pass it by as an illegitimate basis of power. He holds his dominion over the forest, and its horned multitude of citizen-deer, and its swinish multitude or peasantry of wild boars, by right of conquest and force of arms. He levies contributions among them by the free consent of his archers, their virtual representatives. If they should find a voice to complain that we are 'tyrants and usurpers to kill and cook them up in their assigned and native dwelling-place,' we should most convincingly admonish them, with point of

arrow, that they have nothing to do with our laws but to obey them. Is it not written that the fat ribs of the herd shall be fed upon by the mighty in the land? And have not they withal my blessing? my orthodox, canonical, and archiepiscopal blessing? Do I not give thanks for them when they are well roasted and smoking under my nose? What title had William of Normandy to England, that Robin of Locksley has not to merry Sherwood? William fought for his claim. So does Robin. With whom, both? With any that would or will dispute it. William raised contributions. So does Robin. From whom, both? From all that they could or can make pay them. Why did any pay them to William? Why do any pay them to Robin? For the same reason to both: because they could not or cannot help it. They differ indeed, in this, that William took from the poor and gave to the rich, and Robin takes from the rich and gives to the poor: and therein is Robin illegitimate: though in all else he is true prince. Scarlet and John, are they not peers of the forest? lords temporal of Sherwood? And am not I lord spiritual? Am I not archbishop? Am I not pope? Do I not consecrate their banner and absolve their sins? Are not they state, and am not I church? Are not they state monarchical, and am not I church militant? Do I not excommunicate our enemies from venison and brawn, and by 'r Lady, when needs calls, beat them down under my feet? The state levies tax, and the church levies tithe. Even so do we. Mass, we take all at once. What then? It is tax by redemption and tithe by commutation. Your William and Richard can cut and come again, but our Robin deals with slippery subjects that come not twice to his exchequer. What need we then to constitute a court, except a fool and a laureate? For the fool, his only use is to make false knaves merry by art, and we are true men and are merry by nature. For the laureate, his only office is to find virtues in those who

have none, and to drink sack for his pains. We have quite virtue enough to need him not, and can drink our sack for ourselves."

"Well preached, friar," said Robin Hood: "yet there is one thing wanting to constitute a court, and that is a queen. And now, lovely Matilda, look round upon these sylvan shades where we have so often roused the stag from his ferny covert. The rising sun smiles upon us through the stems of that beechen knoll. Shall I take your hand, Matilda, in the presence of this my court? Shall I crown you with our wild-wood coronal, and hail you queen of the forest? Will you be the queen Matilda of your own true king Robin?"

Matilda smiled assent.

"Not Matilda," said the friar: "the rules of our holy alliance require new birth. We have excepted in favour of Little John, because he is great John, and his name is a misnomer. I sprinkle, not thy forehead with water, but thy lips with wine, and baptize thee MARIAN."

"Here is a pretty conspiracy," exclaimed the baron. "Why, you villainous friar, think you to nickname and marry my daughter before my face with impunity?"

"Even so, bold baron," said the friar; "we are strongest here. Say you, might overcomes right? I say no. There is no right but might: and to say that might overcomes right is to say that right overcomes itself: an absurdity most palpable. Your right was the stronger in Arlingford, and ours is the stronger in Sherwood. Your right was right as long as you could maintain it; so is ours. So is King Richard's, with all deference be it spoken; and so is King Saladin's; and their two mights are now committed in bloody fray, and that which overcomes will be right, just as long as it lasts, and as far as it reaches. And now if any of you know any just impediment——"

"Fire and fury," said the baron.

"Fire and fury," said the friar, "are modes of that

might which constitutes right, and are just impediments to any thing against which they can be brought to bear. They are our good allies upon occasion, and would declare for us now if you should put them to the test."

"Father," said Matilda, "you know the terms of our compact: from the moment you restrained my liberty, you renounced your claim to all but compulsory obedience. The friar argues well. Right ends with might. Thick walls, dreary galleries, and tapestried chambers were indifferent to me while I could leave them at pleasure, but have ever been hateful to me since they held me by force. May I never again have roof but the blue sky, nor canopy but the green leaves, nor barrier but the forest-bounds; with the foresters to my train, Little John to my page, Friar Tuck to my ghostly adviser, and Robin Hood to my liege lord. I am no longer lady Matilda Fitzwater, of Arlingford Castle, but plain Maid Marian, of Sherwood Forest."

"Long live Maid Marian!" re-echoed the foresters.

"Oh, false girl!" said the baron, "do you renounce your name and parentage?"

"Not my parentage," said Marian, "but my name indeed: do not all maids renounce it at the altar?"

"The altar!" said the baron: "grant me patience! what do you mean by the altar?"

"Pile green turf," said the friar, "wreathe it with flowers, and crown it with fruit, and we will show the noble baron what we mean by the altar."

The foresters did as the friar directed.

"Now, Little John," said the friar, "on with the cloak of the abbot of Doubleflask. I appoint thee my clerk: thou art here duly elected in full mote."

"I wish you were all in full moat together," said the baron, "and smooth wall on both sides."

"Punnest thou?" said the friar. "A heinous anti-christian offence. Why anti-christian? Be-

cause anti-catholic? Why anti-catholic? Because anti-roman. Why anti-roman? Because Carthaginian. Is not pun from Punic? *punica fides:* the very quint-essential quiddity of bad faith: double visaged: double-tongued. He that will make a pun will—— I say no more. Fie on it. Stand forth, clerk. Who is the bride's father?"

"There is no bride's father," said the baron. "I am the father of Matilda Fitzwater."

"There is none such," said the friar. "This is the fair Maid Marian. Will you make a virtue of necessity, or will you give laws to the flowing tide? Will you give her, or shall Robin take her? Will you be her true natural father, or shall I commute paternity? Stand forth, Scarlet."

"Stand back, sirrah Scarlet," said the baron. "My daughter shall have no father but me. Needs must when the devil drives."

"No matter who drives," said the friar, "so that, like a well-disposed subject, you yield cheerful obedience to those who can enforce it."

"Mawd, sweet Mawd," said the baron, "will you then forsake your poor old father in his distress, with his castle in ashes, and his enemy in power?"

"Not so, father," said Marian; "I will always be your true daughter: I will always love, and serve, and watch, and defend you: but neither will I forsake my plighted love, and my own liege lord, who was your choice before he was mine, for you made him my associate in infancy; and that he continued to be mine when he ceased to be yours, does not in any way show remissness in my duties or falling off in my affections. And though I here plight my troth at the altar to Robin, in the presence of this holy priest and pious clerk, yet. . . . Father, when Richard returns from Palestine, he will restore you to your barony, and perhaps, for your sake, your daughter's husband to the earldom of Huntingdon: should that never be,

should it be the will of fate that we must live and die in the greenwood, I will live and die MAID MARIAN."*

"A pretty resolution," said the baron, "if Robin will let you keep it."

"I have sworn it," said Robin. "Should I expose her tenderness to the perils of maternity, when life and death may hang on shifting at a moment's notice from Sherwood to Barnsdale, and from Barnsdale to the sea-shore? And why should I banquet when my merry men starve? Chastity is our forest law, and even the friar has kept it since he has been here."

"Truly so," said the friar: "for temptation dwells with ease and luxury: but the hunter is Hippolytus, and the huntress is Dian. And now, dearly beloved——"

The friar went through the ceremony with great unction, and Little John was most clerical in the intonation of his responses. After which, the friar sang, and Little John fiddled, and the foresters danced, Robin with Marian, and Scarlet with the baron; and the venison smoked, and the ale frothed, and the wine sparkled, and the sun went down on their unwearied festivity: which they wound up with the following song, the friar leading and the foresters joining chorus:

"Oh! bold Robin Hood is a forester good,
As ever drew bow in the merry greenwood:
At his bugle's shrill singing the echoes are ringing,
The wild deer are springing for many a rood:
Its summons we follow, through brake, over hollow,
The thrice-blown shrill summons of bold Robin Hood.

And what eye hath e'er seen such a sweet Maiden Queen,
As Marian, the pride of the forester's green?
A sweet garden-flower, she blooms in the bower,

* "And therefore is she called Maid Marian,
Because she leads a spotless maiden life,
And shall till Robin's outlaw life have end."—*Old Play.*

Where alone to this hour the wild rose has been :
We hail her in duty the queen of all beauty :
We will live, we will die, by our sweet Maiden Queen.

And here's a grey friar, good as heart can desire,
To absolve all our sins as the case may require :
Who with courage so stout, lays his oak-plant about,
And puts to the rout all the foes of his choir :
For we are his choristers, we merry foresters,
Chorussing thus with our militant friar.

And Scarlet doth bring his good yew-bough and string,
Prime minister is he of Robin our king :
No mark is too narrow for little John's arrow,
That hits a cock sparrow a mile on the wing ;
Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet, and Little John,
Long with their glory old Sherwood shall ring.

Each a good liver, for well-feathered quiver
Doth furnish brawn, venison, and fowl of the river :
But the best game we dish up, it is a fat bishop :
When his angels we fish up, he proves a free giver :
For a prelate so lowly has angels more holy,
And should this world's false angels to sinners deliver.

Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet and Little John,
Drink to them one by one, drink as ye sing :
Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet and Little John,
Echo to echo through Sherwood shall fling :
Robin and Mariòn, Scarlet and Little John,
Long with their glory old Sherwood shall ring."

CHAPTER XII

"A single volume paramount : a code :
A master spirit : a determined road."—WORDSWORTH.

THE next morning Robin Hood convened his foresters, and desired Little John, for the baron's edification, to read over the laws of their forest society. Little John read aloud with a stentorophonic voice.

"At a high court of foresters, held under the greenwood tree, an hour after sun-rise, Robin Hood President, William Scarlet Vice-President, Little John Secretary: the following articles, moved by Friar Tuck in his capacity of Peer Spiritual, and seconded by Much the Miller, were unanimously agreed to:—

"The principles of our society are six: Legitimacy, Equity, Hospitality, Chivalry, Chastity, and Courtesy.

"The articles of Legitimacy are four:

"I. Our government is legitimate, and our society is founded on the one golden rule of right, consecrated by the universal consent of mankind, and by the practice of all ages, individuals, and nations: namely, To keep what we have, and to catch what we can.

"II. Our government being legitimate, all our proceedings shall be legitimate: wherefore we declare war against the whole world, and every forester is by this legitimate declaration legitimately invested with a roving commission, to make lawful prize of every thing that comes in his way.

"III. All forest laws but our own we declare to be null and void.

"IV. All such of the old laws of England as do not in any way interfere with, or militate against, the views of this honourable assembly, we will loyally adhere to and maintain. The rest we declare null and void as far as relates to ourselves, in all cases wherein a vigour beyond the law may be conducive to our own interest and preservation.

"The articles of Equity are three:

"I. The balance of power among the people being very much deranged, by one having too much and another nothing, we hereby resolve ourselves into a congress or court of equity, to restore as far as in us lies the said natural balance of power, by taking from all who have too much as much of the said too much as we can lay our hands on; and giving to those who

have nothing such a portion thereof as it may seem to us expedient to part with.

" II. In all cases a quorum of foresters shall constitute a court of equity, and as many as may be strong enough to manage the matter in hand shall constitute a quorum.

" III. All usurers, monks, courtiers, and other drones of the great hive of society, who shall be found laden with any portion of the honey whereof they have wrongfully despoiled the industrious bee, shall be rightfully despoiled thereof in turn ; and all bishops and abbots shall be bound and beaten,* especially the abbot of Doncaster ; as shall also all sheriffs, especially the sheriff of Nottingham.

" The articles of Hospitality are two :

" I. Postmen, carriers and market-folk, peasants and mechanics, farmers and millers, shall pass through our forest dominions without let or molestation.

" II. All other travellers through the forest shall be graciously invited to partake of Robin's hospitality ; and if they come not willingly they shall be compelled ; and the rich man shall pay well for his fare ; and the poor man shall feast scot free, and peradventure receive bounty in proportion to his desert and necessity.

" The article of Chivalry is one :

" I. Every forester shall, to the extent of his power, aid and protect maids, widows, and orphans, and all weak and distressed persons whomsoever : and no woman shall be impeded or molested in any way : nor

* " These byshoppes and these archbyshoppes
Ye shall them bete and bynde,"

says Robin Hood, in an old ballad. Perhaps, however, this is to be taken not in a literal, but in a figurative sense, from the binding and beating of wheat : for as all rich men were Robin's harvest, the bishops and archbishops must have been the finest and fattest ears among them, from which Robin merely proposes to thresh the grain when he directs them to be bound and beaten : and as Pharaoh's fat kine were typical of fat ears of wheat, so may fat ears of wheat, *mutatis mutandis*, be typical of fat kine.

shall any company receive harm which any woman is in.

"The article of Chastity is one:

"I. Every forester, being Diana's forester and minion of the moon, shall commend himself to the grace of the Virgin, and shall have the gift of purity on pain of expulsion: that the article of chivalry may be secure from infringement, and maids, wives, and widows pass without fear through the forest.

"The article of Courtesy is one:

"I. No one shall miscall a forester. He who calls Robin Robert of Huntingdon, or salutes him by any other title or designation whatsoever except plain Robin Hood; or who calls Marian Matilda Fitzwater, or salutes her by any other title or designation whatsoever except plain Maid Marian; and so of all others; shall for every such offence forfeit a mark, to be paid to the friar.

"And these articles we swear to keep as we are good men and true. Carried by acclamation. God save King Richard.

"LITTLE JOHN, Secretary."

"Excellent laws," said the baron: "excellent, by the holy rood. William of Normandy, with my great great grandfather Fierabras at his elbow, could not have made better. And now, sweet Mawd——"

"A fine, a fine," cried the friar, "a fine, by the article of courtesy."

"Od's life," said the baron, "shall I not call my own daughter Mawd? Methinks there should be a special exception in my favour."

"It must not be," said Robin Hood: "our constitution admits no privilege."

"But I will commute," said the friar; "for twenty marks a year duly paid into my ghostly pocket you shall call your daughter Mawd two hundred times a day."

" Gramercy," said the baron, " and I agree, honest friar, when I can get twenty marks to pay : for till Prince John be beaten from Nottingham, my rents are like to prove but scanty."

" I will trust," said the friar, " and thus let us ratify the stipulation ; so shall our laws and your infringement run together in an amicable parallel."

" But," said Little John, " this is a bad precedent, master friar. It is turning discipline into profit, penalty into perquisite, public justice into private revenue. It is rank corruption, master friar."

" Why are laws made ? " said the friar. " For the profit of somebody. Of whom ? Of him who makes them first, and of others as it may happen. Was not I legislator in the last article, and shall I not thrive by my own law ? "

" Well then, sweet Mawd," said the baron, " I must leave you, Mawd : your life is very well for the young and the hearty, but it squares not with my age or my humour. I must house, Mawd. I must find refuge : but where ? That is the question."

" Where Sir Guy of Gamwell has found it," said Robin Hood, " near the borders of Barnsdale. There you may dwell in safety with him and fair Alice, till King Richard return, and Little John shall give you safe conduct. You will have need to travel with caution, in disguise and without attendants, for Prince John commands all this vicinity, and will doubtless lay the country for you and Marian. Now it is first expedient to dismiss your retainers. If there be any among them who like our life, they may stay with us in the greenwood ; the rest may return to their homes."

Some of the baron's men resolved to remain with Robin and Marian, and were furnished accordingly with suits of green, of which Robin always kept good store.

Marian now declared that as there was danger in the way to Barnsdale, she would accompany Little John

and the baron, as she should not be happy unless she herself saw her father placed in security. Robin was very unwilling to consent to this, and assured her that there was more danger for her than the baron : but Marian was absolute.

" If so, then," said Robin, " I shall be your guide instead of Little John, and I shall leave him and Scarlet joint-regents of Sherwood during my absence, and the voice of Friar Tuck shall be decisive between them if they differ in nice questions of state policy." Marian objected to this, that there was more danger for Robin than either herself or the baron : but Robin was absolute in his turn.

" Talk not of my voice," said the friar ; " for if Marian be a damsel errant, I will be her ghostly esquire."

Robin insisted that this should not be, for number would only expose them to greater risk of detection. The friar, after some debate, reluctantly acquiesced.

While they were discussing these matters, they heard the distant sound of horses' feet.

" Go," said Robin to Little John, " and invite yonder horseman to dinner."

Little John bounded away, and soon came before a young man, who was riding in a melancholy manner, with the bridle hanging loose on the horse's neck, and his eyes drooping towards the ground.

" Whither go you ? " said Little John.

" Whithersoever my horse pleases," said the young man.

" And that shall be," said Little John, " whither I please to lead him. I am commissioned to invite you to dine with my master."

" Who is your master ? " said the young man.

" Robin Hood," said Little John.

" The bold outlaw ? " said the stranger. " Neither he nor you should have made me turn an inch aside yesterday ; but to-day I care not."

" Then it is better for you," said Little John, " that you came to-day than yesterday, if you love dining in a whole skin : for my master is the pink of courtesy : but if his guests prove stubborn, he bastes them and his venison together, while the friar says mass before meat."

The young man made no answer, and scarcely seemed to hear what Little John was saying, who therefore took the horse's bridle and led him to where Robin and his foresters were setting forth their dinner. Robin seated the young man next to Marian. Recovering a little from his stupor, he looked with much amazement at her, and the baron, and Robin, and the friar ; listened to their conversation, and seemed much astonished to find himself in such holy and courtly company. Robin helped him largely to numble-pie and cygnet and pheasant, and the other dainties of his table ; and the friar pledged him in ale and wine, and exhorted him to make good cheer. But the young man drank little, ate less, spake nothing, and every now and then sighed heavily.

When the repast was ended, " Now," said Robin, " you are at liberty to pursue your journey : but first be pleased to pay for your dinner."

" That would I gladly do, Robin," said the young man, " but all I have about me are five shillings and a ring. To the five shillings you shall be welcome, but for the ring I will fight while there is a drop of blood in my veins."

" Gallantly spoken," said Robin Hood. " A love-token, without doubt : but you must submit to our forest laws. Little John must search ; and if he find no more than you say, not a penny will I touch ; but if you have spoken false, the whole is forfeit to our fraternity."

" And with reason," said the friar ; " for thereby is the truth maintained. The abbot of Doubleflask swore there was no money in his valise, and Little John

forthwith emptied it of four hundred pounds. Thus was the abbot's perjury but of one minute's duration; for though his speech was false in the utterance, yet was it no sooner uttered than it became true, and we should have been *participes criminis* to have suffered the holy abbot to depart in falsehood: whereas he came to us a false priest, and we sent him away a true man. Marry, we turned his cloak to further account, and thereby hangs a tale that may be either said or sung; for in truth I am minstrel here as well as chaplain; I pray for good success to our just and necessary warfare, and sing thanksgiving odes when our foresters bring in booty:

'Bold Robin has robed him in ghostly attire,
And forth he is gone like a holy friar,
Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down:
And of two grey friars he soon was aware,
Regaling themselves with dainty fare,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.

"Good morrow, good brothers," said bold Robin Hood,
"And what make you in the good greenwood,
Singing hey down, ho down, down, derry down!
Now give me, I pray you, wine and food;
For none can I find in the good greenwood,
All on the fallen leaves so brown."

"Good brother," they said, "we would give you full fain,
But we have no more than enough for twain,
Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down."
"Then give me some money," said bold Robin Hood,
"For none can I find in the good greenwood,
All on the fallen leaves so brown."

"No money have we, good brother," said they:
"Then," said he, "we three for money will pray:
Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down:
And whatever shall come at the end of our prayer,
We three holy friars will piously share,
All on the fallen leaves so brown."

" We will not pray with thee, good brother, God wot ;
For truly, good brother, thou pleasest us not,
Singing hey down, ho down, down, derry down : "
Then up they both started from Robin to run,
But down on their knees Robin pulled them each one,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.

The grey friars prayed with a doleful face,
But bold Robin prayed with a right merry grace,
Singing, hey down, ho down, down, derry down :
And when they had prayed, their portmanteau he took,
And from it a hundred good angels he shook,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.

' The saints," said bold Robin, " have hearkened our prayer,
And here's a good angel apiece for your share :
If more you would have, you must win ere you wear :
Singing hey down, ho down, down, derry down : "
Then he blew his good horn with a musical cheer,
And fifty green bowmen came trooping full near,
And away the grey friars they bounded like deer,
All on the fallen leaves so brown.' "

CHAPTER XIII

" What can a young lassie, what shall a young lassie,
What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man ? "—BURNS.

" HERE is but five shillings and a ring," said Little John, " and the young man has spoken true."

" Then," said Robin to the stranger, " if want of money be the cause of your melancholy, speak. Little John is my treasurer, and he shall disburse to you."

" It is, and it is not," said the stranger ; " it is, because, had I not wanted money I had never lost my love ; it is not, because, now that I have lost her, money would come too late to regain her."

" In what way have you lost her ? " said Robin :

"let us clearly know that she is past regaining, before we give up our wishes to restore her to you."

"She is to be married this day," said the stranger, "and perhaps is married by this, to a rich old knight; and yesterday I knew it not."

"What is your name?" said Robin.

"Allen," said the stranger.

"And where is the marriage to take place, Allen?" said Robin.

"At Edwinstow church," said Allen, "by the bishop of Nottingham."

"I know that bishop," said Robin; "he dined with me a month since, and paid three hundred pounds for his dinner. He has a good ear and loves music. The friar sang to him to some tune. Give me my harper's cloak, and I will play a part at this wedding."

"These are dangerous times, Robin," said Marian, "for playing pranks out of the forest."

"Fear not," said Robin; "Edwinstow lies not Nottingham-ward, and I will take my precautions."

Robin put on his harper's cloak, while Little John painted his eyebrows and cheeks, tipped his nose with red, and tied him on a comely beard. Marian confessed, that had she not been present at the metamorphosis, she should not have known her own true Robin. Robin took his harp and went to the wedding.

Robin found the bishop and his train in the church porch, impatiently expecting the arrival of the bride and bridegroom. The clerk was observing to the bishop that the knight was somewhat gouty, and that the necessity of walking the last quarter of a mile from the road to the churchyard probably detained the lively bridegroom rather longer than had been calculated upon.

"Oh! by my fay," said the music-loving bishop, "here comes a harper in the nick of time, and now I care not how long they tarry. Ho! honest friend, are you come to play at the wedding?"

" I am come to play anywhere," answered Robin, " where I can get a cup of sack ; for which I will sing the praise of the donor in lofty verse, and emblazon him with any virtue which he may wish to have the credit of possessing, without the trouble of practising."

" A most courtly harper," said the bishop ; " I will fill thee with sack ; I will make thee a walking butt of sack, if thou wilt delight my ears with thy melodies."

" That will I," said Robin ; " in what branch of my art shall I exert my faculty ? I am passing well in all, from the anthem to the glee, and from the dirge to the coranto."

" It would be idle," said the bishop, " to give thee sack for playing me anthems, seeing that I myself do receive sack for hearing them sung. Therefore, as the occasion is festive, thou shalt play me a coranto."

Robin struck up and played away merrily, the bishop all the while in great delight, noddling his head, and beating time with his foot, till the bride and bridegroom appeared. The bridegroom was richly apparelled, and came slowly and painfully forward, hobbling and leering, and pursing up his mouth into a smile of resolute defiance to the gout, and of tender complacency towards his lady love, who, shining like gold at the old knight's expense, followed slowly between her father and mother, her cheeks pale, her head drooping, her steps faltering, and her eyes reddened with tears.

Robin stopped his minstrelsy, and said to the bishop, " This seems to me an unfit match."

" What do you say, rascal ? " said the old knight, hobbling up to him.

" I say," said Robin, " this seems to me an unfit match. What, in the devil's name, can you want with a young wife, who have one foot in flannels and the other in the grave ? "

" What is that to thee, sirrah varlet ? " said the

old knight; "stand away from the porch, or I will fracture thy sconce with my cane."

"I will not stand away from the porch," said Robin, "unless the bride bid me, and tell me that you are her own true love."

"Speak," said the bride's father, in a severe tone, and with a look of significant menace. The girl looked alternately at her father and Robin. She attempted to speak, but her voice failed in the effort, and she burst into tears.

"Here is lawful cause and just impediment," said Robin, "and I forbid the banns."

"Who are you, villain?" said the old knight, stamping his sound foot with rage.

"I am the Roman law," said Robin, "which says that there shall not be more than ten years between a man and his wife; and here are five times ten: and so says the law of nature."

"Honest harper," said the bishop, "you are somewhat over-officious here, and less courtly than I deemed you. If you love sack, forbear; for this course will never bring you a drop. As to your Roman law, and your law of nature, what right have they to say anything which the law of Holy Writ says not?"

"The law of Holy Writ does say it," said Robin; "I expound it so to say; and I will produce sixty commentators to establish my exposition."

And so saying, he produced a horn from beneath his cloak, and blew three blasts, and threescore bowmen in green came leaping from the bushes and trees; and young Allen was the first among them to give Robin his sword, while Friar Tuck and Little John marched up to the altar. Robin stripped the bishop and clerk of their robes, and put them on the friar and Little John; and Allen advanced to take the hand of the bride. Her cheeks grew red and her eyes grew bright, as she locked her hand in her lover's, and tripped lightly with him into the church.

"This marriage will not stand," said the bishop, "for they have not been thrice asked in church."

"We will ask them seven times," said Little John, "lest three should not suffice."

"And in the meantime," said Robin, "the knight and the bishop shall dance to my harping."

So Robin sat in the church porch and played away merrily, while his foresters formed a ring, in the centre of which the knight and bishop danced with exemplary alacrity; and if they relaxed their exertions, Scarlet gently touched them up with the point of an arrow.

The knight grimaced ruefully, and begged Robin to think of his gout.

"So I do," said Robin; "this is the true antipodagron: you shall dance the gout away, and be thankful to me while you live. I told you," he added to the bishop, "I would play at this wedding; but you did not tell me that you would dance at it. The next couple you marry, think of the Roman law."

The bishop was too much out of breath to reply; and now the young couple issued from church, and the bride having made a farewell obeisance to her parents, they departed together with the foresters, the parents storming, the attendants laughing, the bishop puffing and blowing, and the knight rubbing his gouty foot, and uttering doleful lamentations for the gold and jewels with which he had so unwittingly adorned and dowered the bride.

CHAPTER XIV

"As ye came from the holy land
Of blessed Walsinghame,
Oh met ye not with my true love,
As by the way ye came?"—*Old Ballad.*

In pursuance of the arrangement recorded in the twelfth chapter, the baron, Robin, and Marian dis-

guised themselves as pilgrims returned from Palestine, and travelling from the sea-coast of Hampshire to their home in Northumberland. By dint of staff and cockle-shell, sandal and scrip, they proceeded in safety the greater part of the way (for Robin had many sly inns and resting-places between Barnsdale and Sherwood), and were already on the borders of Yorkshire, when, one evening, they passed within view of a castle, where they saw a lady standing on a turret, and surveying the whole extent of the valley through which they were passing. A servant came running from the castle, and delivered to them a message from his lady, who was sick with expectation of news from her lord in the Holy Land, and entreated them to come to her, that she might question them concerning him. This was an awkward occurrence: but there was no pretence for refusal, and they followed the servant into the castle. The baron, who had been in Palestine in his youth, undertook to be spokesman on the occasion, and to relate his own adventures to the lady as having happened to the lord in question. This preparation enabled him to be so minute and circumstantial in his detail, and so coherent in his replies to her questions, that the lady fell implicitly into the delusion, and was delighted to find that her lord was alive and in health, and in high favour with the king, and performing prodigies of valour in the name of his lady, whose miniature he always wore in his bosom. The baron guessed at this circumstance from the customs of that age, and happened to be in the right.

"This miniature," added the baron, "I have had the felicity to see, and should have known you by it among a million." The baron was a little embarrassed by some questions of the lady concerning her lord's personal appearance; but Robin came to his aid, observing a picture suspended opposite to him on the wall, which he made a bold conjecture to be that of the lord in question: and making a calculation of the

influences of time and war, which he weighed with a comparison of the lady's age, he gave a description of her lord sufficiently like the picture in its groundwork to be a true resemblance, and sufficiently differing from it in circumstances to be more an original than a copy. The lady was completely deceived, and entreated them to partake her hospitality for the night; but this they deemed it prudent to decline, and with many humble thanks for her kindness, and representations of the necessity of not delaying their homeward course, they proceeded on their way.

As they passed over the drawbridge, they met Sir Ralph Montfaucon and his squire, who were wandering in quest of Marian, and were entering to claim that hospitality which the pilgrims had declined. Their countenances struck Sir Ralph with a kind of imperfect recognition, which would never have been matured, but that the eyes of Marian, as she passed him, encountered his, and the images of those stars of beauty continued involuntarily twinkling in his sensorium to the exclusion of all other ideas, till memory, love, and hope concurred with imagination to furnish a probable reason for their haunting him so pertinaciously. Those eyes, he thought, were certainly the eyes of Matilda Fitzwater; and if the eyes were hers, it was extremely probable, if not logically consecutive, that the rest of the body they belonged to was hers also. Now, if it were really Matilda Fitzwater, who were her two companions? The baron? Aye, and the elder pilgrim was something like him. And the Earl of Huntingdon? Very probably. The earl and the baron might be good friends again, now that they were both in disgrace together. While he was revolving these cogitations, he was introduced to the lady, and after claiming and receiving the promise of hospitality, he inquired what she knew of the pilgrims who had just departed? The lady told him they were newly returned from Palestine, having been long in the

Holy Land. The knight expressed some scepticism on this point. The lady replied, that they had given her so minute a detail of her lord's proceedings, and so accurate a description of his person, that she could not be deceived in them. This staggered the knight's confidence in his own penetration; and if it had not been a heresy in knighthood to suppose for a moment that there could be *in rerum naturâ* such another pair of eyes as those of his mistress, he would have acquiesced implicitly in the lady's judgment. But while the lady and the knight were conversing, the warder blew his bugle-horn, and presently entered a confidential messenger from Palestine, who gave her to understand that her lord was well; but entered into a detail of his adventures most completely at variance with the baron's narrative, to which not the correspondence of a single incident gave the remotest colouring of similarity. It now became manifest that the pilgrims were not true men; and Sir Ralph Montfaucon sate down to supper with his head full of cogitations, which we shall leave him to chew and digest with his pheasant and canary.

Meanwhile our three pilgrims proceeded on their way. The evening set in black and lowering, when Robin turned aside from the main track, to seek an asylum for the night, along a narrow way that led between rocky and woody hills. A peasant observed the pilgrims as they entered that narrow pass, and called after them: "Whither go you, my masters? there are rogues in that direction."

"Can you show us a direction," said Robin, "in which there are none? If so, we will take it in preference." The peasant grinned, and walked away whistling.

The pass widened as they advanced, and the woods grew thicker and darker around them. Their path wound along the slope of a woody declivity, which rose high above them in a thick rampart of foliage, and

descended almost precipitously to the bed of a small river, which they heard dashing in its rocky channel, and saw its white foam gleaming at intervals in the last faint glimmerings of twilight. In a short time all was dark, and the rising voice of the wind foretold a coming storm. They turned a point of the valley, and saw a light below them in the depth of the hollow, shining through a cottage-casement and dancing in its reflection on the restless stream. Robin blew his horn, which was answered from below. The cottage door opened : a boy came forth with a torch, ascended the steep, showed tokens of great delight at meeting with Robin, and lighted them down a flight of steps rudely cut in the rock, and over a series of rugged stepping-stones, that crossed the channel of the river. They entered the cottage, which exhibited neatness, comfort, and plenty, being amply enriched with pots, pans, and pipkins, and adorned with flitches of bacon and sundry similar ornaments, that gave goodly promise in the firelight that gleamed upon the rafters. A woman, who seemed just old enough to be the boy's mother, had thrown down her spinning-wheel in her joy at the sound of Robin's horn, and was bustling with singular alacrity to set forth her festal ware and prepare an abundant supper. Her features, though not beautiful, were agreeable and expressive, and were now lighted up with such manifest joy at the sight of Robin, that Marian could not help feeling a momentary touch of jealousy, and a half-formed suspicion that Robin had broken his forest law, and had occasionally gone out of bounds, as other great men have done upon occasion, in order to reconcile the breach of the spirit, with the preservation of the letter, of their own legislation. However, this suspicion, if it could be said to exist in a mind so generous as Marian's, was very soon dissipated by the entrance of the woman's husband, who testified as much joy as his wife had done at the sight of Robin ; and in a short time the

whole of the party were amicably seated round a smoking supper of river-fish and wild wood fowl, on which the baron fell with as much alacrity as if he had been a true pilgrim from Palestine.

The husband produced some recondite flasks of wine, which were laid by in a binn consecrated to Robin, whose occasional visits to them in his wanderings were the festal days of these warm-hearted cottagers, whose manners showed that they had not been born to this low estate. Their story has no mystery, and Marian easily collected it from the tenor of their conversation. The young man had been, like Robin, the victim of an usurious abbot, and had been outlawed for debt, and his nut-brown maid had accompanied him to the depths of Sherwood, where they lived an unholy and illegitimate life, killing the king's deer, and never hearing mass. In this state Robin, then Earl of Huntingdon, discovered them in one of his huntings, and gave them aid and protection. When Robin himself became an outlaw, the necessary qualification or gift of continency was too hard a law for our lovers to subscribe to; and as they were thus disqualified for foresters, Robin had found them a retreat in this romantic and secluded spot. He had done similar service to other lovers similarly circumstanced, and had disposed them in various wild scenes which he and his men had discovered in their flittings from place to place, supplying them with all necessaries and comforts from the reluctant disgorgings of fat abbots and usurers. The benefit was in some measure mutual; for these cottages served him as resting-places in his removals, and enabled him to travel untraced and unmolested; and in the delight with which he was always received he found himself even more welcome than he would have been at an inn; and this is saying very much for gratitude and affection together. The smiles which surrounded him were of his own creation, and he participated in the happiness he had bestowed.

The casements began to rattle in the wind, and the rain to beat upon the windows. The wind swelled to a hurricane, and the rain dashed like a flood against the glass. The boy retired to his little bed, the wife trimmed the lamp, the husband heaped logs upon the fire : Robin broached another flask ; and Marian filled the baron's cup, and sweetened Robin's by touching its edge with her lips.

" Well," said the baron, " give me a roof over my head, be it never so humble. Your greenwood canopy is pretty and pleasant in sunshine ; but if I were doomed to live under it, I should wish it were water-tight."

" But," said Robin, " we have tents and caves for foul weather, good store of wine and venison, and fuel in abundance."

" Ay, but," said the baron, " I like to pull off my boots of a night, which you foresters seldom do, and to ensconce myself thereafter in a comfortable bed. Your beech-root is over-hard for a couch, and your mossy stump is somewhat rough for a bolster."

" Had you not dry leaves," said Robin, " with a bishop's surplice over them ? What would you have softer ? And had you not an abbot's travelling cloak for a coverlet ? What would you have warmer ? "

" Very true," said the baron, " but that was an indulgence to a guest, and I dreamed all night of the sheriff of Nottingham. I like to feel myself safe," he added, stretching out his legs to the fire, and throwing himself back in his chair with the air of a man determined to be comfortable. " I like to feel myself safe," said the baron.

At that moment the woman caught her husband's arm, and all the party following the direction of her eyes, looked simultaneously to the window, where they had just time to catch a glimpse of an apparition of an armed head, with its plumage tossing in the storm, on which the light shone from within, and which disappeared immediately.

CHAPTER XV

"O knight, thou lack'st a cup of canary. When did I see thee so put down?"—*Twelfth Night.*

SEVERAL knocks, as from the knuckles of an iron glove, were given to the door of the cottage, and a voice was heard entreating shelter from the storm for a traveller who had lost his way. Robin arose and went to the door.

"What are you?" said Robin.

"A soldier," replied the voice: "an unfortunate adherent of Longchamp, flying the vengeance of Prince John."

"Are you alone?" said Robin.

"Yes," said the voice: "it is a dreadful night. Hospitable cottagers, pray give me admittance. I would not have asked it but for the storm. I would have kept my watch in the woods."

"That I believe," said Robin. "You did not reckon on the storm when you turned into this pass. Do you know there are rogues this way?"

"I do," said the voice.

"So do I," said Robin.

A pause ensued, during which Robin listening attentively caught a faint sound of whispering.

"You are not alone," said Robin. "Who are your companions?"

"None but the wind and the water," said the voice, "and I would I had them not."

"The wind and the water have many voices," said Robin, "but I never before heard them say, What shall we do?"

Another pause ensued: after which,

"Look ye, master cottager," said the voice, in an altered tone, "if you do not let us in willingly, we will break down the door."

"Ho! ho!" roared the baron, "you are become plural are you, rascals? How many are there of you, thieves? What, I warrant, you thought to rob and murder a poor harmless cottager and his wife, and did not dream of a garrison? You looked for no weapon of opposition but spit, poker, and basting ladle, wielded by unskilful hands: but, rascals, here is short sword and long cudgel in hands well tried in war, wherewith you shall be drilled into cullenders and beaten into mummy.'"

No reply was made, but furious strokes from without resounded upon the door. Robin, Marian, and the baron threw by their pilgrim's attire, and stood in arms on the defensive. They were provided with swords, and the cottager gave them bucklers and helmets, for all Robin's haunts were furnished with secret armouries. But they kept their swords sheathed, and the baron wielded a ponderous spear, which he pointed towards the door ready to run through the first that should enter, and Robin and Marian each held a bow with the arrow drawn to its head and pointed in the same direction. The cottager flourished a strong cudgel (a weapon in the use of which he prided himself on being particularly expert), and the wife seized the spit from the fire-place, and held it as she saw the baron hold his spear. The storm of wind and rain continued to beat on the roof and the casement, and the storm of blows to resound upon the door, which at length gave way with a violent crash, and a cluster of armed men appeared without, seemingly not less than twelve. Behind them rolled the stream now changed from a gentle and shallow river to a mighty and impetuous torrent, roaring in waves of yellow foam, partially reddened by the light that streamed through the open door, and turning up its convulsed surface in flashes of shifting radiance from restless masses of half-visible shadow. The stepping-stones, by which the intruders must have crossed, were buried under the waters. On

the opposite bank the light fell on the stems and boughs of the rock-rooted oak and ash tossing and swaying in the blast, and sweeping the flashing spray with their leaves.

The instant the door broke, Robin and Marian loosed their arrows. Robin's arrow struck one of the assailants in the juncture of the shoulder, and disabled his right arm: Marian's struck a second in the juncture of the knee, and rendered him unserviceable for the night. The baron's long spear struck on the mailed breastplate of a third, and being stretched to its full extent by the long-armed hero, drove him to the edge of the torrent, and plunged him into its eddies, along which he was whirled down the darkness of the descending stream, calling vainly on his comrades for aid, till his voice was lost in the mingled roar of the waters and the wind. A fourth springing through the door was laid prostrate by the cottager's cudgel: but the wife being less dexterous than her company, though an Amazon in strength, missed her pass at a fifth, and drove the point of the spit several inches into the right-hand doorpost as she stood close to the left, and thus made a new barrier which the invaders could not pass without dipping under it and submitting their necks to the sword: but one of the assailants seizing it with gigantic rage, shook it at once from the grasp of its holder and from its lodgment in the post, and at the same time made good the irruption of the rest of his party into the cottage.

Now raged an unequal combat, for the assailants fell two to one on Robin, Marian, the baron, and the cottager; while the wife, being deprived of her spit, converted every thing that was at hand to a missile, and rained pots, pans, and pipkins on the armed heads of the enemy. The baron raged like a tiger, and the cottager laid about him like a thresher. One of the soldiers struck Robin's sword from his hand and brought him on his knee, when the boy, who had been

roused by the tumult and had been peeping through the inner door, leaped forward in his shirt, picked up the sword and replaced it in Robin's hand, who instantly springing up, disarmed and wounded one of his antagonists, while the other was laid prostrate under the dint of a brass cauldron launched by the Amazonian dame. Robin now turned to the aid of Marian, who was parrying most dexterously the cuts and slashes of her two assailants, of whom Robin delivered her from one, while a well-applied blow of her sword struck off the helmet of the other, who fell on his knees to beg a boon, and she recognized Sir Ralph Montfaucon. The men who were engaged with the baron and the peasant, seeing their leader subdued, immediately laid down their arms and cried for quarter. The wife brought some strong rope, and the baron tied their arms behind them.

"Now, Sir Ralph," said Marian, "once more you are at my mercy."

"That I always am, cruel beauty," said the discomfited lover.

"Odso! courteous knight," said the baron, "is this the return you make for my beef and canary, when you kissed my daughter's hand in token of contrition for your intermeddling at her wedding? Heart, I am glad to see she has given you a bloody coxcomb. Slice him down, Mawd! slice him down, and fling him into the river."

"Confess," said Marian, "what brought you here, and how did you trace our steps?"

"I will confess nothing," said the knight.

"Then confess you, rascal," said the baron, holding his sword to the throat of the captive squire.

"Take away the sword," said the squire, "it is too near my mouth, and my voice will not come out for fear: take away the sword, and I will confess all." The baron dropped his sword, and the squire proceeded: "Sir Ralph met you, as you quitted Lady

Falkland's castle, and by representing to her who you were, borrowed from her such a number of her retainers as he deemed must ensure your capture, seeing that your familiar the friar was not at your elbow. We set forth without delay, and traced you first by means of a peasant who saw you turn into this valley, and afterwards by the light from the casement of this solitary dwelling. Our design was to have laid an ambush for you in the morning, but the storm and your observation of my unlucky face through the casement made us change our purpose; and what followed you can tell better than I can, being indeed masters of the subject."

"You are a merry knave," said the baron, "and here is a cup of wine for you."

"Gramercy," said the squire, "and better late than never: but I lacked a cup of this before. Had I been pot-valiant, I had held you play."

"Sir knight," said Marian, "this is the third time you have sought the life of my lord and of me, for mine is interwoven with his. And do you think me so spiritless as to believe that I can be yours by compulsion? Tempt me not again, for the next time shall be the last, and the fish of the nearest river shall commute the flesh of a recreant knight into the fast-day dinner of an uncarnivorous friar. I spare you now, not in pity but in scorn. Yet shall you swear to a convention never more to pursue or molest my lord or me, and on this condition you shall live."

The knight had no alternative but to comply, and swore, on the honour of knighthood, to keep the convention inviolate. How well he kept his oath we shall have no opportunity of narrating: *Di lui la nostra istoria più non parla.*

CHAPTER XVI

"Carry me over the water, thou fine fellowe."—*Old Ballad.*

THE pilgrims, without experiencing further molestation, arrived at the retreat of Sir Guy of Gamwell. They found the old knight a cup too low; partly from being cut off from the scenes of his old hospitality and the shouts of his Nottinghamshire vassals, who were wont to make the rafters of his ancient hall re-echo to their revelry; but principally from being parted from his son, who had long been the better half of his flask and pasty. The arrival of our visitors cheered him up; and finding that the baron was to remain with him, he testified his delight and the cordiality of his welcome by pegging him in the ribs till he made him roar.

Robin and Marian took an affectionate leave of the baron and the old knight; and before they quitted the vicinity of Barnsdale, deeming it prudent to return in a different disguise, they laid aside their pilgrim's attire, and assumed the habits and appurtenances of wandering minstrels.

They travelled in this character safely and pleasantly, till one evening at a late hour they arrived by the side of a river, where Robin looking out for a mode of passage perceived a ferry-boat safely moored in a nook on the opposite bank; near which a chimney, sending up a wreath of smoke through the thick-set willows, was the only symptom of human habitation; and Robin, naturally conceiving the said chimney and wreath of smoke to be the outward signs of the inward ferryman, shouted "Over!" with much strength and clearness, but no voice replied, and no ferryman appeared. Robin raised his voice, and shouted with redoubled energy, "Over, Over, O-o-o-over!" A faint echo alone responded "Over!" and again died

away into deep silence: but after a brief interval a voice from among the willows, in a strange kind of mingled intonation that was half a shout and half a song, answered:

"Over, over, over, jolly, jolly, rover,
Would you then come over? Over, over, over?
Jolly, jolly rover, here's one lives in clover:
Who finds the clover? The jolly, jolly rover.
He finds the clover, let him then come over,
The jolly, jolly rover, over, over, over."

"I much doubt," said Marian, "if this ferryman do not mean by clover something more than the toll of his ferry-boat."

"I doubt not," answered Robin, "he is a levier of toll and tithe, which I shall put him upon proof of his right to receive, by making trial of his might to enforce."

The ferryman emerged from the willows and stepped into his boat. "As I live," exclaimed Robin, "the ferryman is a friar."

"With a sword," said Marian, "stuck in his rope girdle."

The friar pushed his boat off manfully, and was presently half over the river.

"It is friar Tuck," said Marian.

"He will scarcely know us," said Robin; "and if he do not, I will break a staff with him for sport."

The friar came singing across the water: the boat touched the land: Robin and Marian stepped on board: the friar pushed off again.

"Silken doublets, silken doublets," said the friar: "slenderly lined, I trow: your wandering minstrel is always poor toll: your sweet angels of voices pass current for a bed and a supper at the house of every lord that likes to hear the fame of his valour without the trouble of fighting for it. What need you of purse or pouch? You may sing before thieves. Pedlars, pedlars: wandering from door to door with the small

ware of lies and cajolery : exploits for carpet-knights ; honesty for courtiers ; truth for monks, and chastity for nuns : a good saleable stock that costs the vender nothing, defies wear and tear, and when it has served a hundred customers is as plentiful and as marketable as ever. But, sirrahs, I'll none of your balderdash. You pass not hence without clink of brass, or I'll knock your musical noddles together till they ring like a pair of cymbals. That will be a new tune for your minstrelships."

This friendly speech of the friar ended as they stepped on the opposite bank. Robin had noticed as they passed that the summer stream was low.

" Why, thou brawling mongrel," said Robin, " that whether thou be thief, friar, or ferryman, or an ill-mixed compound of all three, passes conjecture, though I judge thee to be simple thief, what barkest thou at thus ? Villain, there is clink of brass for thee. Dost thou see this coin ? Dost thou hear this music ? Look and listen : for touch thou shalt not : my minstrelship defies thee. Thou shalt carry me on thy back over the water, and receive nothing but a cracked sconce for thy trouble."

" A bargain," said the friar : " for the water is low, the labour is light, and the reward is alluring." And he stooped down for Robin, who mounted his back, and the friar waded with him over the river.

" Now, fine fellow," said the friar, " thou shalt carry me back over the water, and thou shalt have a cracked sconce for thy trouble."

Robin took the friar on his back, and waded with him into the middle of the river, when by a dexterous jerk he suddenly flung him off and plunged him horizontally over head and ears in the water. Robin waded to shore, and the friar, half swimming and half scrambling, followed.

" Fine fellow, fine fellow," said the friar, " now will I pay thee thy cracked sconce."

"Not so," said Robin, "I have not earned it: but thou hast earned it, and shalt have it."

It was not, even in those good old times, a sight of every day to see a troubadour and a friar playing at single-stick by the side of a river, each aiming with fell intent at the other's coxcomb. The parties were both so skilled in attack and defence, that their mutual efforts for a long time expended themselves in quick and loud rappings on each other's oaken staves. At length Robin by a dexterous feint contrived to score one on the friar's crown: but in the careless moment of triumph a splendid sweep of the friar's staff struck Robin's out of his hand into the middle of the river, and repaid his crack on the head with a degree of vigour that might have passed the bounds of a jest if Marian had not retarded its descent by catching the friar's arm.

"How now, recreant friar," said Marian; "what have you to say why you should not suffer instant execution, being detected in open rebellion against your liege lord? Therefore kneel down, traitor, and submit your neck to the sword of the offended law."

"Benefit of clergy," said the friar: "I plead my clergy. And is it you indeed, ye scapegraces? Ye are well disguised: I knew ye not, by my flask. Robin, jolly Robin, he buys a jest dearly that pays for it with a bloody coxcomb. But here is balm for all bruises, outward and inward. (The friar produced a flask of canary.) Wash thy wound twice and thy throat thrice with this solar concoction, and thou shalt marvel where was thy hurt. But what moved ye to this frolic? Knew ye not that ye could not appear in a mask more fashioned to move my bile than in that of these gilders and lackerers of the smooth surface of worthlessness, that bring the gold of true valour into disrepute, by stamping the baser metal with the fairer impression? I marvelled to find any such given to fighting (for they have an old instinct of self-preserva-

tion) : but I rejoiced thereat, that I might discuss to them poetical justice : and therefore have I cracked thy sconce : for which, let this be thy medicine."

"But wherefore," said Marian, "do we find you here, when we left you joint lord warden of Sherwood?"

"I do but retire to my devotions," replied the friar. "This is my hermitage, in which I first took refuge when I escaped from my beloved brethren of Rubygill ; and to which I still retreat at times from the vanities of the world, which else might cling to me too closely, since I have been promoted to be peer-spiritual of your forest-court. For, indeed, I do find in myself certain indications and admonitions that my day has past its noon ; and none more cogent than this : that daily of bad wine I grow more intolerant, and of good wine have a keener and more fastidious relish. There is no surer symptom of receding years. The ferryman is my faithful varlet. I send him on some pious errand, that I may meditate in ghostly privacy, when my presence in the forest can best be spared : and when can it be better spared than now, seeing that the neighbourhood of Prince John, and his incessant perquisitions for Marian, have made the forest too hot to hold more of us than are needful to keep up a quorum, and preserve unbroken the continuity of our forest-dominion ? For, in truth, without your greenwood majesties, we have hardly the wit to live in a body, and at the same time to keep our necks out of jeopardy, while that arch-rebel and traitor John infests the precincts of our territory."

The friar now conducted them to his peaceful cell, where he spread his frugal board with fish, venison, wild-fowl, fruit, and canary. Under the compound operation of this *materia medica* Robin's wounds healed apace, and the friar, who hated minstrelsy, began as usual chirping in his cups. Robin and Marian chimed in with his tuneful humour till the midnight moon peeped in upon their revelry.

It was now the very witching time of night, when they heard a voice shouting, " Over ! " They paused to listen, and the voice repeated " Over ! " in accents clear and loud, but which at the same time either were in themselves, or seemed to be, from the place and the hour, singularly plaintive and dreary. The friar fidgeted about in his seat : fell into a deep musing : shook himself, and looked about him : first at Marian, then at Robin, then at Marian again ; filled and tossed off a cup of canary, and relapsed into his reverie.

" Will you not bring your passenger over ? " said Robin. The friar shook his head and looked mysterious.

" That passenger," said the friar, " will never come over. Every full moon, at midnight, that voice calls, ' Over ! ' I and my varlet have more than once obeyed the summons, and we have sometimes had a glimpse of a white figure under the opposite trees : but when the boat has touched the bank, nothing has been to be seen ; and the voice has been heard no more till the midnight of the next full moon."

" It is very strange," said Robin.

" Wondrous strange," said the friar, looking solemn.

The voice again called " Over ! " in a long plaintive musical cry.

" I must go to it," said the friar, " or it will give us no peace. I would all my customers were of this world. I begin to think that I am Charon, and that this river is Styx."

" I will go with you, friar," said Robin.

" By my flask," said the friar, " but you shall not."

" Then I will," said Marian.

" Still less," said the friar, hurrying out of the cell. Robin and Marian followed : but the friar outstepped them, and pushed off his boat.

A white figure was visible under the shade of the opposite trees. The boat approached the shore, and the figure glided away. The friar returned.

They re-entered the cottage, and sat some time conversing on the phenomenon they had seen. The friar sipped his wine, and after a time, said :

" There is a tradition of a damsel who was drowned here some years ago. The tradition is——"

But the friar could not narrate a plain tale : he therefore cleared his throat, and sang with due solemnity, in a ghostly voice :

" A damsel came in midnight rain,
And called across the ferry :
The weary wight she called in vain,
Whose senses sleep did bury.
At evening, from her father's door
She turned to meet her lover :
At midnight, on the lonely shore,
She shouted, ' Over, over ! '

She had not met him by the tree
Of their accustomed meeting,
And sad and sick at heart was she,
Her heart all wildly beating.
In chill suspense the hours went by,
The wild storm burst above her :
She turned her to the river nigh,
And shouted, ' Over, Over ! '

A dim, discoloured, doubtful light
The moon's dark veil permitted,
And thick before her troubled sight
Fantastic shadows flitted.
Her lover's form appeared to glide,
And beckon o'er the water :
Alas ! his blood that morn had dyed
Her brother's sword with slaughter.

Upon a little rock she stood,
To make her invocation :
She marked not that the rain-swoll'n flood
Was islanding her station.

The tempest mocked her feeble cry :
No saint his aid would give her :
The flood swelled high and yet more high,
And swept her down the river.

Yet oft beneath the pale moonlight,
When hollow winds are blowing,
The shadow of that maiden bright
Glides by the dark stream's flowing.
And when the storms of midnight rave,
While clouds the broad moon cover,
The wild gusts waft across the wave
The cry of, ' Over, over ! ' "

While the friar was singing, Marian was meditating : and when he had ended she said, " Honest friar, you have misplaced your tradition, which belongs to the æstuary of a nobler river, where the damsel was swept away by the rising of the tide, for which your land-flood is an indifferent substitute. But the true tradition of this stream I think I myself possess, and I will narrate it in your own way :

" It was a friar of orders free,
A friar of Rubygill :
At the greenwood-tree a vow made he
But he kept it very ill :
A vow made he of chastity,
But he kept it very ill.
He kept it, perchance, in the conscious shade
Of the bounds of the forest wherein it was made :
But he roamed where he listed, as free as the wind,
And he left his good vow in the forest behind :
For its woods out of sight were his vow out of mind,
With the friar of Rubygill.

In lonely hut himself he shut,
The friar of Rubygill ;
Where the ghostly elf absolved himself,
To follow his own good will :
And he had no lack of canary sack,
To keep his conscience still.

And a damsel well knew, when at lonely midnight
It gleamed on the waters, his signal-lamp-light :
'Over ! over !' she warbled with nightingale throat,
And the friar sprung forth at the magical note,
And she crossed the dark stream in his trim ferry-boat,
With the friar of Rubygill."

"Look you now," said Robin, "if the friar does not blush. Many strange sights have I seen in my day, but never till this moment did I see a blushing friar."

"I think," said the friar, "you never saw one that blushed not, or you saw good canary thrown away. But you are welcome to laugh if it so please you. None shall laugh in my company, though it be at my expense, but I will have my share of the merriment. The world is a stage, and life is a farce, and he that laughs most has most profit of the performance. The worst thing is good enough to be laughed at, though it be good for nothing else ; and the best thing, though it be good for something else, is good for nothing better."

And he struck up a song in praise of laughing and quaffing, without further adverting to Marian's insinuated accusation ; being, perhaps, of opinion that it was a subject on which the least said would be the soonest mended.

So passed the night. In the morning a forester came to the friar, with intelligence that Prince John had been compelled, by the urgency of his affairs in other quarters, to disembarrass Nottingham Castle of his royal presence. Our wanderers returned joyfully to their forest-dominion, being thus relieved from the vicinity of any more formidable belligerent than their old bruised and beaten enemy the Sheriff of Nottingham.

CHAPTER XVII

"Oh! this life
Is nobler than attending for a check,
Richer than doing nothing for a bribe,
Prouder than rustling, in unpaid-for silk."
Cymbeline.

So Robin and Marian dwelt and reigned in the forest, ranging the glades and the greenwoods from the matins of the lark to the vespers of the nightingale, and administering natural justice according to Robin's ideas of rectifying the inequalities of human condition: raising genial dews from the bags of the rich and idle, and returning them in fertilizing showers on the poor and industrious: an operation which more enlightened statesmen have happily reversed, to the unspeakable benefit of the community at large. The light footsteps of Marian were impressed on the morning dew beside the firmer step of her lover, and they shook its large drops about them as they cleared themselves a passage through the thick tall fern, without any fear of catching cold, which was not much in fashion in the twelfth century. Robin was as hospitable as Cathmor; for seven men stood on seven paths to call the stranger to his feast. It is true, he superadded the small improvement of making the stranger pay for it: than which what could be more generous? For Cathmor was himself the prime giver of his feast, whereas Robin was only the agent to a series of strangers, who provided in turn for the entertainment of their successors; which is carrying the disinterestedness of hospitality to its acme. Marian often killed the deer,

"Which Scarlet dressed, and Friar Tuck blessed,
While Little John wandered in search of a guest."

Robin was very devout, though there was great unity in his religion: it was exclusively given to our Lady

the Virgin, and he never set forth in a morning till he had said three prayers, and had heard the sweet voice of his Marian singing a hymn to their mutual patroness. Each of his men had, as usual, a patron saint according to his name or taste. The friar chose a saint for himself, and fixed on Saint Botolph, whom he euphonized into Saint Bottle, and maintained that he was that very Panomphic Pantagruelian saint, well known in ancient France as a female divinity, by the name of La Dive Bouteille, whose oracular monosyllable "Trincq," is celebrated and understood by all nations, and is expounded by the learned doctor Alcofribas,* who has treated at large on the subject, to signify "drink." Saint Bottle, then, was the saint of Friar Tuck, who did not yield even to Robin and Marian in the assiduity of his devotions to his chosen patron. Such was their summer life, and in their winter caves they had sufficient furniture, ample provender, store of old wine, and assuredly no lack of fuel, with joyous music and pleasant discourse to charm away the season of darkness and storms.

Many moons had waxed and waned, when on the afternoon of a lovely summer day a lusty broad-boned knight was riding through the forest of Sherwood. The sun shone brilliantly on the full green foliage, and afforded the knight a fine opportunity of observing picturesque effects, of which it is to be feared he did not avail himself. But he had not proceeded far before he had an opportunity of observing something much more interesting, namely, a fine young outlaw leaning, in the true Sherwood fashion, with his back against a tree. The knight was preparing to ask the stranger a question, the answer to which, if correctly

* Alcofribas Nasier: an anagram of François Rabelais, and his assumed appellation.

The reader who desires to know more about this oracular divinity may consult the said doctor Alcofribas Nasier, who will usher him into the adytum through the medium of the high priestess Bacbuc.

given, would have relieved him from a doubt that pressed heavily on his mind, as to whether he was in the right road or the wrong, when the youth prevented the inquiry by saying : " In God's name, sir knight, you are late to your meals. My master has tarried dinner for you these three hours."

" I doubt," said the knight, " I am not he you wot of. I am no where bidden to-day, and I know none in this vicinage."

" We feared," said the youth, " your memory would be treacherous : therefore am I stationed here to refresh it."

" Who is your master ? " said the knight ; " and where does he abide ? "

" My master," said the youth, " is called Robin Hood, and he abides hard by."

" And what knows he of me ? " said the knight.

" He knows you," answered the youth, " as he does every way-faring knight and friar, by instinct."

" Gramercy," said the knight ; " then I understand his bidding : but how if I say I will not come ? "

" I am enjoined to bring you," said the youth. " If persuasion avail not, I must use other argument."

" Say'st thou so ? " said the knight ; " I doubt if thy stripling rhetoric would convince me."

" That," said the young forester, " we will see."

" We are not equally matched, boy," said the knight. " I should get less honour by thy conquest, than grief by thy injury."

" Perhaps," said the youth, " my strength is more than my seeming, and my cunning more than my strength. Therefore let it please your knighthood to dismount."

" It shall please my knighthood to chastise thy presumption," said the knight, springing from his saddle.

Hereupon, which in those days was usually the result of a meeting between any two persons anywhere, they proceeded to fight.

The knight had in an uncommon degree both strength and skill ; the forester had less strength, but not less skill than the knight, and showed such a mastery of his weapon as reduced the latter to great admiration.

They had not fought many minutes by the forest clock, the sun ; and had as yet done each other no worse injury than that the knight had wounded the forester's jerkin, and the forester had disabled the knight's plume ; when they were interrupted by a voice from a thicket, exclaiming, " Well fought, girl : well fought. Mass, that had nigh been a shrewd hit. Thou owest him for that, lass. Marry, stand by, I'll pay him for thee."

The knight turning to the voice, beheld a tall friar issuing from the thicket, brandishing a ponderous cudgel.

" Who art thou ? " said the knight.

" I am the church militant of Sherwood," answered the friar. " Why art thou in arms against our lady queen ? "

" What meanest thou ? " said the knight.

" Truly, this," said the friar, " is our liege lady of the forest, against whom I do apprehend thee in overt act of treason. What sayest thou for thyself ? "

" I say," answered the knight, " that if this be indeed a lady, man never yet held me so long."

" Spoken," said the friar, " like one who hath done execution. Hast thou thy stomach full of steel ? Wilt thou diversify thy repast with a taste of my oak-graff ? Or wilt thou incline thine heart to our venison, which truly is cooling ? Wilt thou fight ? or wilt thou dine ? or wilt thou fight and dine ? or wilt thou dine and fight ? I am for thee, choose as thou mayest."

" I will dine," said the knight ; " for with lady I never fought before, and with friar I never fought yet, and with neither will I ever fight knowingly : and if

this be the queen of the forest, I will not, being in her own dominions, be backward to do her homage."

So saying, he kissed the hand of Marian, who was pleased most graciously to express her approbation.

"Gramercy, sir knight," said the friar, "I laud thee for thy courtesy, which I deem to be no less than thy valour. Now do thou follow me, while I follow my nose, which scents the pleasant odour of roast from the depth of the forest recesses. I will lead thy horse, and do thou lead my lady."

The knight took Marian's hand, and followed the friar, who walked before them, singing :

"When the wind blows, when the wind blows
From where under buck the dry log glows,
What guide can you follow,
O'er brake and o'er hollow,
So true as a ghostly, ghostly nose ?"

CHAPTER XVIII

"Robin and Richard were two pretty men."
Mother Goose's Melody.

THEY proceeded, following their infallible guide, first along a light elastic greensward under the shade of lofty and wide-spreading trees that skirted a sunny opening of the forest, then along labyrinthine paths, which the deer, the outlaw, or the woodman had made, through the close shoots of the young coppices, through the thick undergrowth of the ancient woods, through beds of gigantic fern that filled the narrow glades and waved their green feathery heads above the plume of the knight. Along these sylvan alleys they walked in single file ; the friar singing and pioneering in the van, the horse plunging and floundering behind the friar, the lady following "in maiden meditation fancy-free,"

and the knight bringing up the rear, much marvelling at the strange company into which his stars had thrown him. Their path had expanded sufficiently to allow the knight to take Marian's hand again, when they arrived in the august presence of Robin Hood and his court.

Robin's table was spread under a high overarching canopy of living boughs, on the edge of a natural lawn of verdure starred with flowers, through which a swift transparent rivulet ran sparkling in the sun. The board was covered with abundance of choice food and excellent liquor, not without the comeliness of snow-white linen and the splendour of costly plate, which the Sheriff of Nottingham had unwillingly contributed to supply, at the same time with an excellent cook, whom Little John's art had spirited away to the forest with the contents of his master's silver scullery.

An hundred foresters were here assembled over-ready for their dinner, some seated at the table and some lying in groups under the trees.

Robin bade courteous welcome to the knight, who took his seat between Robin and Marian at the festal board ; at which was already placed one strange guest in the person of a portly monk, sitting between Little John and Scarlet, with his rotund physiognomy elongated into an unnatural oval by the conjoint influence of sorrow and fear : sorrow for the departed contents of his travelling treasury, a good-looking valise which was hanging empty on a bough ; and fear for his personal safety, of which all the flasks and pasties before him could not give him assurance. The appearance of the knight, however, cheered him up with a semblance of protection, and gave him just sufficient courage to demolish a cygnet and a numble-pie, which he diluted with the contents of two flasks of canary sack.

But wine, which sometimes creates and often increases joy, doth also, upon occasion, heighten sorrow :

and so it fared now with our portly monk, who had no sooner explained away his portion of provender, than he began to weep and bewail himself bitterly.

"Why dost thou weep, man?" said Robin Hood. "Thou hast done thine embassy justly, and shalt have thy Lady's grace."

"Alack! alack!" said the monk: "no embassy had I, luckless sinner, as well thou wottest, but to take to my abbey in safety the treasure whereof thou hast despoiled me."

"Propound me his case," said Friar Tuck, "and I will give him ghostly counsel."

"You well remember," said Robin Hood, "the sorrowful knight who dined with us here twelve months and a day gone by."

"Well do I," said Friar Tuck. "His lands were in jeopardy with a certain abbot, who would allow him no longer day for their redemption. Whereupon you lent to him the four hundred pounds which he needed, and which he was to repay this day, though he had no better security to give than our Lady the Virgin."

"I never desired better," said Robin, "for she never yet failed to send me my pay; and here is one of her own flock, this faithful and well-favoured monk of St. Mary's, hath brought it me duly, principal and interest to a penny, as Little John can testify, who told it forth. To be sure, he denied having it, but that was to prove our faith. We sought and found it."

"I know nothing of your knight," said the monk: "and the money was our own, as the Virgin shall bless me."

"She shall bless thee," said Friar Tuck, "for a faithful messenger."

The monk resumed his wailing. Little John brought him his horse. Robin gave him leave to depart. He sprang with singular nimbleness into the saddle, and vanished without saying, God give you good day.

The stranger knight laughed heartily as the monk rode off.

"They say, sir knight," said Friar Tuck, "they should laugh who win: but thou laughest who art likely to lose."

"I have won," said the knight, "a good dinner, some mirth, and some knowledge: and I cannot lose by paying for them."

"Bravely said," answered Robin. "Still it becomes thee to pay: for it is not meet that a poor forester should treat a rich knight. How much money hast thou with thee?"

"Troth, I know not," said the knight. "Sometimes much, sometimes little, sometimes none. But search, and what thou findest, keep: and for the sake of thy kind heart and open hand, be it what it may, I shall wish it were more."

"Then, since thou sayest so," said Robin, "not a penny will I touch. Many a false churl comes hither, and disburses against his will: and till there is lack of these, I prey not on true men."

"Thou art thyself a true man, right well I judge, Robin," said the stranger knight, "and seemest more like one bred in court than to thy present outlaw life."

"Our life," said the friar, "is a craft, an art, and a mystery. How much of it, think you, could be learned at court?"

"Indeed, I cannot say," said the stranger knight; "but I should apprehend very little."

"And so should I," said the friar: "for we should find very little of our bold open practice, but should hear abundance of praise of our principles. To live in seeming fellowship and secret rivalry; to have a hand for all, and a heart for none; to be everybody's acquaintance and nobody's friend; to meditate the ruin of all on whom we smile, and to dread the secret stratagems of all who smile on us; to pilfer honours and despoil fortunes, not by fighting in daylight, but

by sapping in darkness: these are arts which the court can teach, but which we, by 'r Lady, have not learned. But let your court-minstrel tune up his throat to the praise of your court-hero, then come our principles into play: then is our practice extolled: not by the same name, for their Richard is a hero, and our Robin is a thief: marry, your hero guts an exchequer, while your thief disembowels a portmanteau; your hero sacks a city, while your thief sacks a cellar: your hero marauds on a larger scale, and that is all the difference, for the principle and the virtue are one: but two of a trade cannot agree; therefore your hero makes laws to get rid of your thief, and gives him an ill name that he may hang him: for might is right, and the strong make laws for the weak, and they that make laws to serve their own turn do also make morals to give colour to their laws."

"Your comparison, friar," said the stranger, "fails in this: that your thief fights for profit, and your hero for honour. I have fought under the banners of Richard, and if, as you phrase it, he guts exchequers, and sacks cities, it is not to win treasure for himself, but to furnish forth the means of his greater and more glorious aim."

"Misconceive me not, sir knight," said the friar. "We all love and honour King Richard, and here is a deep draught to his health: but I would show you, that we foresters are miscalled by opprobrious names, and that our virtues, though they follow at humble distance, are yet truly akin to those of Cœur-de-Lion. I say not that Richard is a thief, but I say that Robin is a hero: and for honour, did ever yet man, miscalled thief, win greater honour than Robin? Do not all men grace him with some honourable epithet? The most gentle thief, the most courteous thief, the most bountiful thief, yea, and the most honest thief? Richard is courteous, bountiful, honest, and valiant: but so also is Robin: it is the false word that makes

the unjust distinction. They are twin-spirits, and should be friends, but that fortune hath differently cast their lot: but their names shall descend together to the latest days, as the flower of their age and of England: for in the pure principles of freebootery have they excelled all men; and to the principles of freebootery, diversely developed, belong all the qualities to which song and story concede renown."

"And you may add, friar," said Marian, "that Robin, no less than Richard, is king in his own dominion; and that if his subjects be fewer, yet are they more uniformly loyal."

"I would, fair lady," said the stranger, "that thy latter observation were not so true. But I nothing doubt, Robin, that if Richard could hear your friar, and see you and your lady, as I now do, there is not a man in England whom he would take by the hand more cordially than yourself."

"Gramercy, sir knight," said Robin——But his speech was cut short by Little John calling, "Hark!"

All listened. A distant trampling of horses was heard. The sounds approached rapidly, and at length a group of horsemen glittering in holyday dresses was visible among the trees.

"God's my life!" said Robin, "what means this? To arms, my merrymen all."

"No arms, Robin," said the foremost horseman, riding up and springing from his saddle: "have you forgotten Sir William of the Lee?"

"No, by my fay," said Robin; "and right welcome again to Sherwood."

Little John bustled to re-array the disorganized economy of the table, and replace the dilapidations of the provender.

"I come late, Robin," said Sir William, "but I came by a wrestling, where I found a good yeoman wrongfully beset by a crowd of sturdy varlets, and I staid to do him right."

"I thank thee for that, in God's name," said Robin, "as if thy good service had been to myself."

"And here," said the knight, "is thy four hundred pound; and my men have brought thee an hundred bows and as many well-furnished quivers; which I beseech thee to receive and to use as a poor token of my grateful kindness to thee: for me and my wife and children didst thou redeem from beggary."

"Thy bows and arrows," said Robin, "will I joyfully receive: but of thy money, not a penny. It is paid already. My Lady, who was thy security, hath sent it me for thee."

Sir William pressed, but Robin was inflexible.

"It is paid," said Robin, "as this good knight can testify, who saw my Lady's messenger depart but now."

Sir William looked round to the stranger knight, and instantly fell on his knee, saying, "God save King Richard."

The foresters, friar and all, dropped on their knees together, and repeated in chorus: "God save King Richard."

"Rise, rise," said Richard, smiling: "Robin is king here, as his lady hath shown. I have heard much of thee, Robin, both of thy present and thy former state. And this, thy fair forest-queen, is, if tales say true, the lady Matilda Fitzwater."

Marian signed acknowledgment.

"Your father," said the king, "has approved his fidelity to me, by the loss of his lands, which the newness of my return, and many public cares, have not yet given me time to restore: but this justice shall be done to him, and to thee also, Robin, if thou wilt leave thy forest-life and resume thy earldom, and be a peer of Cœur-de-Lion: for braver heart and juster hand I never yet found."

Robin looked round on his men.

"Your followers," said the king, "shall have free

pardon, and such of them as thou wilt part with shall have maintenance from me ; and if ever I confess to priest, it shall be to thy friar."

" Gramercy to your majesty," said the friar ; " and my inflictions shall be flasks of canary ; and if the number be (as in grave cases I may, peradventure, make it) too great for one frail mortality, I will relieve you by vicarious penance, and pour down my own throat the redundancy of the burden."

Robin and his followers embraced the king's proposal. A joyful meeting soon followed with the baron and Sir Guy of Gamwell : and Richard himself honoured with his own presence a formal solemnization of the nuptials of our lovers, whom he constantly distinguished with his peculiar regard.

The friar could not say, Farewell to the forest, without something of a heavy heart : and he sang as he turned his back upon its bounds, occasionally reverting his head :—

" Ye woods, that oft at sultry noon
Have o'er me spread your massy shade :
Ye gushing streams, whose murmured tune
Has in my ear sweet music made,
While, where the dancing pebbles show
Deep in the restless fountain-pool
The gelid water's upward flow,
My second flask was laid to cool :

Ye pleasant sights of leaf and flower :
Ye pleasant sounds of bird and bee :
Ye sports of deer in sylvan bower :
Ye feasts beneath the greenwood tree :
Ye baskings in the vernal sun :
Ye slumbers in the summer dell :
Ye trophies that this arm has won :
And must ye hear your friar's farewell ? "

But the friar's farewell was not destined to be eternal. He was domiciled as the family confessor of

the Earl and Countess of Huntingdon, who led a discreet and courtly life, and kept up old hospitality in all its munificence, till the death of King Richard and the usurpation of John, by placing their enemy in power, compelled them to return to their greenwood sovereignty; which, it is probable, they would have before done from choice, if their love of sylvan liberty had not been counteracted by their desire to retain the friendship of Cœur-de-Lion. Their old and tried adherents, the friar among the foremost, flocked again round their forest-banner; and in merry Sherwood they long lived together, the lady still retaining her former name of Maid Marian, though the appellation was then as much a misnomer as that of Little John.

II. "MAID MARIAN" AND "IVANHOE"

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK was a man of marked and almost eccentric character, able, learned, and original. The comparative obscurity of his origin and career did not prevent him from gaining a memorable name in the world of literature, as the confidant, instructor, and correspondent of Shelley, and as the author of a small number of novels and poems, peculiar in kind, and in their own qualities unsurpassed. He might have been a satirist but for his kindliness, a pedant but for his overflowing merriment, a tyrant but for his love of unconventionality, and sometimes a bore but for the perfection of his style. As it is, his learning, like a high price of admission to an entertainment, tends to limit his audience: and perhaps *Maid Marian* is the only one of his novels which will ever be really popular. But they are all alike the work of a brilliant and humorous mind: the perfect expression of the man we see in his portrait—genial, decided, sensitive, obstinate, loving the bodily delights almost as much as the intellectual, keenly and sometimes perversely interested in his theories and ferociously damning those of others, but beaming through his glasses with a most genial charity, like an old-fashioned schoolmaster mellowed by the dignity and comfort of a good deanery.

He was born in 1785, and though his resources were not great he lived the life of a scholar and man of leisure till 1815. He was then at Great Marlow, and Shelley, whose acquaintance he had made some three years before, was settled for a time in a cottage at

Bishopsgate, on the borders of Windsor Great Park. In 1816 Shelley moved to Marlow, and the friendship became a close and lasting one. In that year Peacock published his spirited and amusing *Headlong Hall*, laying the scene in the Snowdon district of Wales, where he had five years before spent a memorable holiday. In 1817 appeared *Melincourt*, half of which is admirable, the other half laboured and doctrinaire. But in 1818 he was again successful with *Nightmare Abbey*, a satiric romance which contains the best imitation of Byron ever written, and the most humorous and delicate parody of Shelley's multiple and incompatible affections.

In the summer of the same year he found a fresh subject, one which instantly opened the sluices of his imagination and high spirits. He chanced upon Joseph Ritson's book—*Robin Hood; a Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads now extant relative to that English Outlaw: with Historical Anecdotes of his life.* On August 6, 1818, he notes in his diary: "Could not read or write for scheming my romance. Rivers, castles, forests, abbeys, monks, maids, kings, and banditti dancing before me like a masked ball." Again on 12th and 13th August he was "reading ballads about Robin Hood." On 30th August he wrote to Shelley: "I am also scheming a novel, which I shall write in the winter, and which will keep me during the whole of that season at home." In another letter to Shelley on 29th November, he describes his novel as "a Comic Romance of the Twelfth Century, which I shall make the vehicle of much oblique satire on the oppressions that are done under the sun."

But now came an unexpected interruption: a chance of entering the India Office was offered to five selected young men of talent, among whom were James Mill and Peacock. To qualify for the appointment theses were to be written on Indian

affairs; and this work, and afterwards the duties of his new office, took a large part of Peacock's time. Another distraction was his marriage to Jane Gryffydh, daughter of the vicar of Eglwys Vach, a young lady whom he had admired in 1811, but had not since seen. The affair was now arranged after an interval of more than seven years by a single letter on each side. This was in 1819: and it was not until 1822 that *Maid Marian* was at last completed and published. Three other novels followed at varying intervals: *The Misfortunes of Elphin* in 1829; *Crotchet Castle*, the wittiest and most perfect of all, in 1831; and the charming but unequal *Gryll Grange* in 1860.

Among the seven books named, *Maid Marian* holds a place which is for several reasons unique. The setting being historical, the satire is more oblique and the interest more general; the songs are more frequent and more free, as befits the mood of the story, which is really a comic opera rather than a novel, and descends from *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Beggar's Opera*. But these excellences apart, there is one more aspect of the romance, in which it appears so singular as to deserve the description of a problem or a mystery. It is impossible to read *Maid Marian* and *Ivanhoe* without speculating on the nature of the connection between the two books.

This connection is a curious and baffling one throughout. In 1818, when Peacock was "scheming his romance" in so much excitement, Ritson's volume of Robin Hood ballads had long been familiar to Walter Scott (it was published in 1795), and he had just resolved to make use of the story as part of his material for a new novel. His object was, he says in the Preface to *Ivanhoe*, "to obtain an interest for the traditions and manners of Old England, similar to that which has been excited in behalf of those

of our poorer and less celebrated neighbours. The name of Robin Hood, if duly conjured with, should raise a spirit as soon as that of Rob Roy; and the patriots of England deserve no less their renown in our modern circles, than the Bruces and Wallaces of Caledonia." *Ivanhoe* was begun accordingly, during the same painful illness of 1818 in which *The Legend of Montrose* was finished; by July 1819 it was well advanced, and the book was published in December of that year.

Scott's success was, of course, immediate and resounding, and it can hardly have failed to trouble Peacock, who saw his chosen ground occupied before him, and by bigger battalions than his own. He must have known at once how the case would look to others—as it does now look to us. Here are two novels, each bearing no doubt the signs of descent from a common ancestor, but also, in spite of great differences in mood and treatment, resembling one another in a striking degree—to such a degree in fact as to suggest that one is imitative of the other; or perhaps, since the serious romance evidently came first, that *Maid Marian* is an intentional burlesque of *Ivanhoe*.

The possibility of this suggestion was in fact foreseen by Peacock, and when he published his book he took care to insert in it a prefatory note: "This little work, with the exception of the last three chapters, was all written in the autumn of 1818." The precaution was sufficient for its purpose: Peacock was well known as a man of letters, a wit, a scholar, and a gentleman; and from 1819 to 1923 his words have been quoted, with the extracts from diary and letters which I have already given, as conclusive evidence that *Maid Marian* owes its resemblance to *Ivanhoe* in part to a common ancestry and in part to pure coincidence. Both Dr. Richard Garnett, who edited Peacock's novels in 1891, and

Mr. Carl van Doran, who wrote Peacock's Life in 1911, consider his claim to originality proved and his good faith assured. We may agree with them, cordially, and yet find questions of great interest involved in the likeness and difference of the two books.

If we undertake to do a little detective work in this case, let us be quite clear, to begin with, that it is not guilt which we are looking to discover. Not only is Peacock's good faith unquestionable, but his right, as an author and artist, to borrow where he pleases, is also unquestionable. He is making something, creating something, and he therefore stands to be judged, not by the material he has used, but by the use he has made of it. Originality, the inward or personal difference between one maker and another, cannot be borrowed, imitated, or stolen ; if it is once there it will remain and be visible even though an entire story is being retold. But when this is agreed, and all moral or legal questions are ruled out as irrelevant, there may still be, and there are here, interesting matters to be inquired into, when one man's work bears a certain relation to another's.

The general resemblances of *Maid Marian* and *Ivanhoe* are simple enough. The Robin Hood legend and its heroes appear in all the eighteen chapters of Peacock's book ; in Scott's they form a secondary thread in the story, but are the making of some fifteen chapters out of forty-four. In both we recognize the famous outlaw and marksman of the *Lytell Geste of Robin Hood*—the best and earliest ballad in Ritson's collection — with his almost equally famous followers, Little John, William Scarlet or Scathelock, Much the Miller's son, and Friar Tuck. In both, as in the ballad, they waylay priors and abbots, defeat oppressors, perform miracles of archery, kill the king's deer, bring all and sundry to their rendezvous in a forest glade ; and then, after proving the immense superiority of the greenwood life

to any more civilized existence, end by falling on their knees before the real King of England and receiving his forgiveness for their unlawful habits. In both there is a subtle suggestion that these habits are justified by the fact that they belong to a poetical, genial, disinterested side of life, and are necessary as part of the joys of a free but not undisciplined society in the open air; further, that they are in a special degree characteristic of the native Englishman, and ought to prevail over all foreign ways, however civilized or fashionable.

Corresponding to this general likeness there are some differences which are equally natural. Scott could not have refrained from songs in such a book as *Ivanhoe;* five of his characters sing—Richard and Wamba twice play the troubadour in company, old Ulrica shrieks a Saxon death song, Rebecca and Rowena have each a hymn ready when their turn comes. But Peacock goes far beyond this: his book is less than a third the length of *Ivanhoe,* but he gives us three times as many songs—eleven set pieces and eight catches. Except for a few in which the heroine joins, and one which she sings alone, these are all in the part of Brother Michael, the tall friar, who has all the qualities of Friar Tuck combined with some others characteristic of Rabelais' heroic monk, Frère Jean des Entommeures. It is to the spirited singing of Brother Michael and Matilda that the book owes its operatic character; it is their practice to "heighten" every good "situation" with a duet. Matilda, too, is herself a mark of difference; she is the centre of Peacock's story, but Scott did not need her, having already two rival heroines upon his hands.

And now that we have noted the natural likenesses and unlikenesses between the two books, let us look at the passages in which resemblance may be held to imply a closer connection than that which comes

from common origin or by accident. Remembering again that this is a literary or scientific inquiry, and not a legal or moral one, let us each one read and judge for himself. First *Maid Marian* should be read with a fair knowledge of the Robin Hood story in mind, as given in the Ballads, but without thought of any other source. The first seven chapters go quickly by, with a mingled effect of familiarity and novelty; then in chapter viii. we are to witness the execution, by the Sheriff of Nottingham's men, of Robin's cousin, William Gamwell. But when they reach the gallows, Little John appears, with "a ghostly friar." The friar is Robin in disguise; he goes up to young Gamwell, at the foot of the ladder, under the very nose of the suspicious Sheriff, and begins to play his part. He opens his book, groans, turns up the white of his eyes, tosses his arms in the air, and says to the assembled crowd, "*Dominus vobiscum.*" A moment or two of silence; then he throws off his holy robes, appears as a forester clothed in green, with sword and horn, rallies his bowmen, rescues Gamwell, and shoots the Sheriff: a most dramatic escape.

Now look at *Ivanhoe*, if you do not know it already; find the passage (on p. 166 of this book) where Wamba the fool volunteers to go in the disguise of a friar to carry a message to his master Cedric, imprisoned in Front-de-Bœuf's castle. He is told that, if he has any difficulty in playing his part, two words will pull him through—the two words "*Pax vobiscum.*" And when he helps Cedric to escape by giving him his own friar's disguise, he gives him also the same two words as a spell which will silence all queries. "Then my religious orders are soon taken," says Cedric—"*Pax vobiscum*"—and he escapes accordingly.

Another vivid reminder of *Ivanhoe* comes only a few pages later, in the siege of the castle of Arlingford, the material for which is not to be found in the

Ballads. The castle is defended by Lord Fitzwalter with his daughter Matilda, a little round friar, and some retainers; the attackers, Prince John and his men, have constructed a huge machine on wheels for the assault, which is to take place next morning. But the garrison make a sortie, and with the support of Robin Hood's band from the forest side, the machine is fired and destroyed. The Baron and his daughter are successfully brought off by their men and the foresters, and escape towards Sherwood. Prince John intends to sack the castle, but has the mortification to see it burst into flames.

Scott gives more space to his siege of the castle of Torquilstone, but it ends in a very similar way. After a partial success by the attackers under Locksley and the Black Knight, there is a lull, during which Ulrica sets fire to the magazine of fuel under the room where she has locked in the wounded tyrant, Front-de-Bœuf. Then when the whole building is in flames the Templar Bois-Guilbert makes his escape, carrying off Rebecca with the remnant of his men (pp. 176–177).

So far, the resemblance between these two passages is enough to interest a reader who knows both books, but only if his attention has been drawn to the parallel. It becomes, however, much more striking towards the end. The final scene of the burning of Torquilstone is one of grandeur and doom, the towers of the great building falling with crash on crash, while the maniac figure of Ulrica appears for a time upon a turret, with long dishevelled hair, chanting a wild and barbarous Saxon hymn till she falls headlong into the burning ruin. The spectators stand still for some minutes, awestruck and unable to stir a finger, save to sign the cross: a solemn and tremendous scene, in the high heroic style.

Peacock's final scene reminds us of all this, but is cast in the very opposite mood. The setting is

exactly the same: a castle burning in the midst of a forest landscape, into which the defenders have already escaped, and in front of it a body of the besiegers looking on at the catastrophe. But the figure which appears from the doomed castle is a little fat friar, uttering a piteous cry in a doleful voice, and quaking like a jelly when he is brought before Prince John, to be ludicrously accused of having struck the prince down in battle, mowed down his men like grass, and set fire to the stronghold as a last desperate measure to cover the retreat of his enemies. The bystanders merrily bear witness that the little friar did none of these things, and he is allowed to bound away like a fat buck into the forest. Whether this was so intended or not, it is the perfection of burlesque; a material resemblance is established, and with it a complete spiritual difference is made to clash, so as to produce at the same moment both recognition and a sense of contrast, a kind of disappointment turned to a new enjoyment.

There are two other passages in *Maid Marian* worth considering along with their parallels in Scott's romance. It will be remembered that, in the early chapters of *Ivanhoe*, Prior Aymer and Bois-Guilbert are guided to Cedric's house by Wilfred of Ivanhoe, disguised as "a Palmer just returned from the Holy Land." After supper this palmer, or pilgrim, is sent for by the Lady Rowena, that she may ask for tidings of her lover, the Knight of Ivanhoe, who is at the Crusade. Similarly in Peacock's fourteenth chapter we are told how the Baron, Robin, and Marian disguised themselves as pilgrims returned from Palestine; and how, when they were passing within view of a castle, they were sent for by a lady who had viewed them from a turret and wished to question them concerning her husband, who had long been at the Crusade. And at last, when the Baron was

being questioned too closely, Robin came to his aid with personal details of the absent lord's appearance, which he took at a guess from a portrait hanging on the wall; "and making a calculation of the influences of time and war, he gave a description sufficiently like the picture in its groundwork to be a true resemblance, and sufficiently differing from it to be more an original than a copy." This last sentence sounds like an excellent description by a burlesque author of his own method.

The fourth echo or parallel is this: the description of King Richard, disguised as the Black Knight, riding through Sherwood. In *Ivanhoe* it runs as follows: "In the meantime, the Black Champion and his guide were pacing at their leisure through the recesses of the forest. . . . You are then to imagine this knight, such as we have already described him, strong of person, tall, broad shouldered, and large of bone." In *Maid Marian* we find this, at much the same stage of the romance: "Many moons had waxed and waned, when on the afternoon of a lovely summer day a lusty broad boned knight was riding through the forest of Sherwood." This, it may be said, is only a matter of a word or two; but again it may be replied that in literature a matter of a word or two is a matter of vital importance.

The resemblances which I have picked out come not from the last three, but the last eleven chapters of *Maid Marian;* and I think when they are taken all together they prove that neither Peacock nor his editors have completely cleared up the relation between the two books. What is certain? First that Peacock had an original idea and wrote an original book; secondly, that he was aware of resemblances between his book and Scott's, and yet was able to say conscientiously that when he first read *Ivanhoe* the whole of *Maid Marian,* with the exception of the last three chapters (xvi. to xviii.),

had been lying in his desk for three years. But we must add, thirdly, that the resemblances are more striking in chapters viii. to xv. than in xvi. to xviii., and fourthly, that they are not to be accounted for by a common origin from the books read by both authors, because the material for the particular passages in question is not to be found in these books.

These four points enable us to clear the ground a little. There are in the records of literature many cases of resemblance due to the action of what is called the " unconscious self." The words which we read, and sometimes even the ideas or incidents, appear to be entirely forgotten ; but they remain stored as it were in the basement of the mind, and writers often make use of these stores without knowing that they are doing so. Many things in *Paradise Lost*, including even the great scene in Hell, and the character and speech of Satan, can be traced to the poems of Fletcher, Spenser, and other poets ; but Milton was probably unaware of the fact ; what he had stored had become his own and he used it as his own. But this theory of unconscious reminiscence will not help us here. Peacock was not unconscious when he wrote the Prefatory note to *Maid Marian ;* he had become aware of the resemblance to *Ivanhoe*, and yet was clear that he had borrowed nothing from Scott.

How then did what was in Scott's mind come to be in Peacock's ? Can we fall back on " coincidence " as our explanation of the facts ? Before we answer we must decide in what sense we are using the word, for it is a vague one. If I meet two men in a morning, and both are named William Smith, I say it is a mere coincidence, meaning that both Smith and William are very common names, commonly combined, and that this is a sufficient explanation, without looking for any further meaning in the incident. But if both

men happened to be named John Richard William Alexander Dwyer, the case would be different. It would be a coincidence, but I should probably inquire what relation the two were to one another, and be confident of discovering a cause for the identity of name. The case of Peacock and Scott is similar to this; their books are alike not in one very common detail, but in a number of passages, which make them like one another and unlike any other stories. We are impelled to go further, and ask for some cause other than mere chance; for "chance" would be only a word to cover our ignorance of what has really happened.

Another word, "second sight," has for centuries been used in Scott's country, and may furnish a suggestion here. It is used to name a power by which its possessor can have knowledge of thoughts or events which are beyond the reach of his ordinary senses—either in the past or the future, or at a distance in space. The numerous instances in which the use of this power has been reported have not been scientifically inquired into, and have been generally passed over with incredulity. The inquiry, when it comes, should also take account of the everyday occurrences described as cases of "telepathy." A.B. suddenly finds, after an interval of some months, a special reason for writing to C.D., a friend at a distance. C.D. not only has an impulse to write to A.B. the same day, but gives the exact information for which A.B. is inquiring. The letters cross: it is a coincidence. But when the same thing happens to the same individual for the twentieth time, he begins to form a theory, and perhaps to verify it by experiment.

Is it possible for certain minds to have a direct intuition of things past, or to be affected by the mind of another, engaged at the same time, or earlier, upon the same subject or material or line of thought; and

this though no communication be possible between them through the ordinary channels of sense? The history of literature offers evidence on two points which may be connected with this question. First, the ancient belief in inspiration, long ago crudely stated and illegitimately used, survives in a reasonable form among writers of imagination. There are probably few poets of any power who have not been aware at times that they have "surpassed themselves"—that some insight or excellence has appeared in their work which was not present in their conscious intention. Genius has been defined as the artist's power of drawing frequently or habitually upon sources deeper than the individual consciousness. And if we pass on to inquire what are those sources, this second point has also been strikingly illuminated by the poets, ancient and modern—by none more strikingly than by Richard Watson Dixon:—

> "There is a soul above the soul of each,
> A mightier soul, which yet to each belongs:
> There is a sound made of all human speech
> And numerous as the concord of all songs:
> And in that soul lives each, in each that soul,
> Though all the ages are its lifetime vast;
> Each soul that dies in its most sacred whole
> Receiveth life that shall for ever last."

It is no trivial question, then, upon which we have been working, but one worth pursuing till we have found out, so far as that is possible, what it is that happens to us in artistic creation, and what is the reservoir beyond the finite spring of personal life. If it should prove to be the universal of ourselves, the infinite sum and source of all human powers, we shall have discovered not only the explanation of some of our literary resemblances, but the secret of Time and Eternity, and of the twofold nature of the world.

III. THE GREENWOOD IN "IVANHOE"

(This section consists of those passages in "Ivanhoe" which have their setting in the Greenwood, or relate the doings of Robin Hood (Locksley) and his men. The introductory or connecting paragraphs, which are placed within square brackets, are not verbatim extracts from Scott, but follow his order of events and use his words and phrases.)

I

[In the spring of the year 1194 King Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who had been imprisoned in Austria on his way home from the Crusade, was ransomed and set free; but there was great uncertainty in England as to the date when he might be expected to return, and his brother John was actively intriguing against him with certain of the Norman nobles. The Saxons, or native English, formed a third party; but they were divided, some favouring Richard as a less oppressive master than John and his overbearing friends, others hankering after a restoration of the old Saxon kings, who had left a few descendants among the thanes.

Cedric the Saxon, one of those thanes, supported the claim of the Saxon Athelstane of Coningsburgh, and hoped to see him marry his own ward Rowena, who was also a descendant of King Alfred. He lived in a large old hall in the country of the Don, between Sheffield and Doncaster, which included the moors and woods of the Forest of Barnsdale: his only son, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, had gone with King Richard to Palestine, and had been disinherited for this by his father; but the Lady Rowena still considered

herself betrothed to Wilfred, and had no intention of marrying her dull cousin Athelstane.

Two of Cedric's serfs, Gurth the swineherd and Wamba the fool, or jester, were driving the swine homeward one evening, when two Normans, Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx Abbey, and Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, a Knight Templar, asked them the way to Rotherwood, Cedric's house, where they intended to spend the night. Wamba gave them confusing directions, and they soon had to ask again of a palmer, or pilgrim, who was resting by the roadside. He conducted them to the house, where they were received by Cedric and Rowena. A Jew, Isaac of York, came in shortly afterwards and also begged for shelter.

At supper in the great Saxon hall, the Palmer and the Jew were allowed to sit at a small table by the chimney, not far from the high table. The nobles talked of Palestine and King Richard; the Palmer, hearing Bois-Guilbert boasting of the Templars, and disparaging other English knights, contradicted him from his corner. He had himself, he said, just returned from a pilgrimage to Palestine, and he angered Bois-Guilbert by recalling the name of Ivanhoe, who had unhorsed the Templar at St. John-de-Acre, and would certainly be ready to do it again on his return. The Templar, not knowing that he was actually speaking to Ivanhoe, fiercely challenged the absent knight, and the Palmer accepted the defiance for him. After supper Rowena sent for the Palmer to question him about Wilfred of Ivanhoe, but she did not penetrate his disguise.

During the night the Palmer woke the Jew and warned him that a plot was on foot to seize and rob him as he passed through the territory of Front-de-Bœuf, a Norman tyrant in league with Bois-Guilbert. They arranged to escape together, and the Palmer succeeded in bringing the Jew and his daughter

Rebecca safely to Sheffield. Old Isaac was grateful; he guessed that the Palmer was a knight, and was longing to take part in the great tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche, to which Bois-Guilbert was going. He offered the Palmer, to his astonishment, not only a horse, but a large sum of money to buy armour.

In the lists at Ashby every one was present: Prince John and his party of disloyal nobles, Cedric and Rowena, Athelstane, Isaac and Rebecca, and among the crowd was a stout well-set yeoman, arrayed in Lincoln green, having twelve arrows stuck in his belt, with a baldric and badge of silver, and a bow of six feet length in his hand. This picturesque and sturdy person began by rebuking the Jew for jostling others, and afterwards attracted the attention of Prince John himself, by applauding Cedric for drawing his sword and cutting in two the lance of an insolent Norman. This was De Bracy, the leader of a band of Free Companions, or mercenary troops, prepared to support John against King Richard.

"I always add my hollo," said the yeoman, "when I see a good shot or a gallant blow."

"Sayest thou?" answered the Prince, "then thou canst hit the white thyself, I'll warrant."

"A woodsman's mark, and at a woodsman's distance, I can hit," answered the yeoman.

"And Wat Tyrrel's mark, at a hundred yards," said a voice from behind, but by whom uttered could not be discerned.

This allusion to the fate of William Rufus, his great uncle, at once incensed and alarmed Prince John. He satisfied himself, however, with commanding the men-at-arms, who surrounded the lists, to keep an eye on "the braggart," pointing to the yeoman.

"By St Grizzel," he added, "we will try his own skill, who is so ready to give his voice to the feats of others."

" I shall not fly the trial," said the yeoman, with the composure which marked his whole deportment.

The jousting then began: Bois-Guilbert and four other Normans were the challengers, and Bois-Guilbert was the most successful. But when all seemed over, a solitary trumpet was heard, and a rider, calling himself the Disinherited Knight, took up the Templar's challenge, and after one indecisive course, completely overthrew him in the second. He then challenged and defeated all the other four. The heralds announced him as the victor of the day; but he declined to raise his visor or give his name. When Prince John handed him the wreath to be given to the lady whom he chose as Queen of Beauty, he laid it at the feet of Rowena, and excused himself from attending the Prince's banquet. The royal party were now leaving the lists; yet, with the vindictive memory proper to offended pride, the Prince fixed an eye of stern resentment upon the yeoman who had displeased him earlier in the day and commanded the men-at-arms again, " On your life, suffer not that fellow to escape; and woe betide him unless his skill should prove some apology for his insolence." The day then ended, the Disinherited Knight receiving in his tent the squires of his defeated opponents, who came to surrender the forfeited horses and armour of their masters. The horses he returned; for the armour he accepted ransom, and then gave half of it to the squires; only from Bois-Guilbert he would not receive anything, and he sent him a defiance to fight again in a mortal combat. He then sent his own squire, who turned out to be Gurth in disguise, to repay the Jew the money he had lent; but on his way back Gurth was overtaken by Rebecca, who returned to him a bag of gold zecchins for the knight who had helped her and her money-loving old father to escape capture. Gurth was waylaid in the night by a band of outlaws, but he told them his story, and

the captain of the band allowed him to fight for his money against a big outlaw called "the Miller." They fought by moonlight, and the Miller, though very handy with the quarter-staff, lost his temper and was at last stretched upon the greensward. Gurth was then allowed to go free.

On the second day of the tournament the fighting was to be a *mellay*, or *mêlée*. All competitors were placed in two lines, one commanded by the Disinherited Knight, the other by the Templar, and they charged each other all together. The fight then became confused, and the Disinherited Knight was being singled out and surrounded, when a knight in black armour, whom nobody knew, and who had been rather backward in the fight, suddenly came to the rescue of his leader, felled men right and left, Front-de-Bœuf and Athelstane among the rest, and so left the Disinherited Knight free to charge and overthrow Bois-Guilbert once more. The Black Knight then slipped away unnoticed, and in his absence Prince John was compelled to adjudge the Disinherited Knight victor of the second day. This time the champion was to receive the Chaplet of Honour from the Queen of Beauty; the marshals insisted on raising his visor, and Rowena shrieked on seeing his face; but as he knelt before her, he fell forward, fainting from a spearwound in his side. Prince John was not pleased at Ivanhoe's return; but he was consoling himself by planning to marry Rowena to a Norman, when a sealed letter from France was put into his hands, containing these alarming words, "*Take heed to yourself, for the Devil is unchained.*"]

The Prince turned pale as death: "my brother Richard has obtained his freedom."

"It is time then," said Fitzurse, who hoped to be his Chancellor, "to draw our party to a head, either at York, or some other centrical place. Your highness must break short this present mummery."

"The yeomen and commons," said De Bracy, "must not be dismissed discontented, for lack of their share in the sports."

"The day," said Waldemar, "is not yet very far spent—let the archers shoot a few rounds at the target, and the prize be adjudged. This will be an abundant fulfilment of the Prince's promises, so far as this herd of Saxon serfs is concerned."

"I thank thee, Waldemar," said the Prince; "thou remindest me, too, that I have a debt to pay to that insolent peasant who yesterday insulted our person. Our banquet also shall go forward to-night as we proposed. Were this my last hour of power, it should be an hour sacred to revenge and to pleasure—let new cares come with to-morrow's new day."

The sound of the trumpets soon recalled those spectators who had already begun to leave the field; and proclamation was made that Prince John, suddenly called by high and peremptory public duties, held himself obliged to discontinue the entertainments of to-morrow's festival: nevertheless, that, unwilling so many good yeomen should depart without a trial of skill, he was pleased to appoint them, before leaving the ground, presently to execute the competition of archery intended for the morrow. To the best archer a prize was to be awarded, being a bugle-horn, mounted with silver, and a silken baldric richly ornamented with a medallion of St. Hubert, the patron of silvan sport.

More than thirty yeomen at first presented themselves as competitors, several of whom were rangers and underkeepers in the royal forests of Needwood and Charnwood. When, however, the archers understood with whom they were to be matched, upwards of twenty withdrew themselves from the contest, unwilling to encounter the dishonour of almost certain defeat. For in those days the skill of each celebrated marksman was as well known for many miles

round him as the qualities of a horse trained at Newmarket are familiar to those who frequent that well-known meeting.

The diminished list of competitors for silvan fame still amounted to eight. Prince John stepped from his royal seat to view more nearly the persons of these chosen yeomen, several of whom wore the royal livery. Having satisfied his curiosity by this investigation, he looked for the object of his resentment, whom he observed standing on the same spot, and with the same composed countenance which he had exhibited upon the preceding day.

"Fellow," said Prince John, "I guessed by thy insolent babble thou wert no true lover of the longbow, and I see thou darest not adventure thy skill among such merry men as stand yonder."

"Under favour, sir," replied the yeoman, "I have another reason for refraining to shoot, besides the fearing discomfiture and disgrace."

"And what is thy other reason?" said Prince John, who, for some cause which perhaps he could not himself have explained, felt a painful curiosity respecting this individual.

"Because," replied the woodsman, "I know not if these yeomen and I are used to shoot at the same marks; and because, moreover, I know not how your Grace might relish the winning of a third prize by one who has unwittingly fallen under your displeasure."

Prince John coloured as he put the question, "What is thy name, yeoman?"

"Locksley," answered the yeoman.

"Then, Locksley," said Prince John, "thou shalt shoot in thy turn, when these yeomen have displayed their skill. If thou carriest the prize, I will add to it twenty nobles; but if thou losest it, thou shalt be stripped of thy Lincoln green, and scourged out of the lists with bowstrings, for a wordy and insolent braggart."

"And how if I refuse to shoot on such a wager?" said the yeoman.—"Your Grace's power, supported, as it is, by so many men-at-arms, may indeed easily strip and scourge me, but cannot compel me to bend or to draw my bow."

"If thou refusest my fair proffer," said the Prince, "the Provost of the lists shall cut thy bowstring, break thy bow and arrows, and expel thee from the presence as a faint-hearted craven."

"This is no fair chance you put on me, proud Prince," said the yeoman, "to compel me to peril myself against the best archers of Leicester and Staffordshire, under the penalty of infamy if they should overshoot me. Nevertheless, I will obey your pleasure."

"Look to him close, men-at-arms," said Prince John, "his heart is sinking; I am jealous lest he attempt to escape the trial.—And do you, good fellows, shoot boldly round; a buck and a butt of wine are ready for your refreshment in yonder tent, when the prize is won."

A target was placed at the upper end of the southern avenue which led to the lists. The contending archers took their station in turn, at the bottom of the southern access, the distance between that station and the mark allowing full distance for what was called a shot at rovers. The archers, having previously determined by lot their order of precedence, were to shoot each three shafts in succession. The sports were regulated by an officer of inferior rank, termed the Provost of the Games; for the high rank of the marshals of the lists would have been held degraded had they condescended to superintend the sports of the yeomanry.

One by one the archers, stepping forward, delivered their shafts yeomanlike and bravely. Of twenty-four arrows, shot in succession, ten were fixed in the target, and the others ranged so near it that, considering the

distance of the mark, it was accounted good archery. Of the ten shafts which hit the target, two within the inner ring were shot by Hubert, a forester in the service of Malvoisin, who was accordingly pronounced victorious.

"Now, Locksley," said Prince John to the bold yeoman, with a bitter smile, "wilt thou try conclusions with Hubert, or wilt thou yield up bow, baldric, and quiver to the Provost of the sports?"

"Sith it be no better," said Locksley, "I am content to try my fortune; on condition that when I have shot two shafts at yonder mark of Hubert's, he shall be bound to shoot one at that which I shall propose."

"That is but fair," answered Prince John, "and it shall not be refused thee.—If thou dost beat this braggart, Hubert, I will fill the bugle with silver pennies for thee."

"A man can do but his best," answered Hubert; "but my grandsire drew a good long bow at Hastings, and I trust not to dishonour his memory."

The former target was now removed, and a fresh one of the same size placed in its room. Hubert, who, as victor in the first trial of skill, had the right to shoot first, took his aim with great deliberation, long measuring the distance with his eye, while he held in his hand his bended bow, with the arrow placed on the string. At length he made a step forward, and raising the bow at the full stretch of his left arm, till the centre or grasping-place was nigh level with his face, he drew his bowstring to his ear. The arrow whistled through the air, and lighted within the inner ring of the target, but not exactly in the centre.

"You have not allowed for the wind, Hubert," said his antagonist, bending his bow, "or that had been a better shot."

So saying, and without showing the least anxiety to pause upon his aim, Locksley stepped to the

appointed station, and shot his arrow as carelessly in appearance as if he had not even looked at the mark. He was speaking almost at the instant that the shaft left the bowstring, yet it alighted in the target two inches nearer to the white spot which marked the centre than that of Hubert.

"By the light of heaven!" said Prince John to Hubert, "an thou suffer that runagate knave to overcome thee, thou art worthy of the gallows!"

Hubert had but one set speech for all occasions. "An your highness were to hang me," he said, "a man can but do his best. Nevertheless, my grandsire drew a good bow——"

"The foul fiend on thy grandsire and all his generation!" interrupted John; "shoot, knave, and shoot thy best, or it shall be the worse for thee!"

Thus exhorted, Hubert resumed his place, and not neglecting the caution which he had received from his adversary, he made the necessary allowance for a very light air of wind, which had just arisen, and shot so successfully that his arrow alighted in the very centre of the target.

"A Hubert! a Hubert!" shouted the populace, more interested in a known person than in a stranger. "In the clout!—in the clout!—a Hubert for ever!"

"Thou canst not mend that shot, Locksley," said the Prince, with an insulting smile.

"I will notch his shaft for him, however," replied Locksley.

And letting fly his arrow with a little more precaution than before, it lighted right upon that of his competitor, which it split to shivers. The people who stood around were so astonished at his wonderful dexterity, that they could not even give vent to their surprise in their usual clamour. "This must be the devil, and no man of flesh and blood," whispered the yeomen to each other; "such archery was never seen since a bow was first bent in Britain."

"And now," said Locksley, "I will crave your Grace's permission to plant such a mark as is used in the North Country; and welcome every brave yeoman who shall try a shot at it to win a smile from the bonny lass he loves best."

He then turned to leave the lists. "Let your guards attend me," he said, "if you please; I go but to cut a rod from the next willow-bush."

Prince John made a signal that some attendants should follow him in case of his escape; but the cry of "Shame! shame!" which burst from the multitude, induced him to alter his ungenerous purpose.

Locksley returned almost instantly with a willow wand about six feet in length, perfectly straight, and rather thicker than a man's thumb. He began to peel this with great composure, observing at the same time that to ask a good woodsman to shoot at a target so broad as had hitherto been used, was to put shame upon his skill. "For his own part," he said, "and in the land where he was bred, men would as soon take for their mark King Arthur's round table, which held sixty knights around it. A child of seven years old," he said, "might hit yonder target with a headless shaft; but," added he, walking deliberately to the other end of the lists, and sticking the willow wand upright in the ground, "he that hits that rod at five-score yards, I call him an archer fit to bear both bow and quiver before a king, an it were the stout King Richard himself."

"My grandsire," said Hubert, "drew a good bow at the battle of Hastings, and never shot at such a mark in his life, and neither will I. If this yeoman can cleave that rod, I give him the bucklers —or rather, I yield to the devil that is in his jerkin, and not to any human skill; a man can but do his best, and I will not shoot where I am sure to miss. I might as well shoot at the edge of our parson's whittle,

or at a wheat straw, or at a sunbeam, as at a twinkling white streak which I can hardly see."

"Cowardly dog!" said Prince John.—"Sirrah Locksley, do thou shoot; but if thou hittest such a mark, I will say thou art the first man ever did so. Howe'er it be, thou shalt not crow over us with a mere show of superior skill."

"I will do my best, as Hubert says," answered Locksley; "no man can do more."

So saying, he again bent his bow, but on the present occasion looked with attention to his weapon, and changed the string, which he thought was no longer truly round, having been a little frayed by the two former shots. He then took his aim with some deliberation, and the multitude awaited the event in breathless silence. The archer vindicated their opinion of his skill—his arrow split the willow rod against which it was aimed. A jubilee of acclamations followed; and even Prince John, in admiration of Locksley's skill, lost for an instant his dislike to his person. "These twenty nobles," he said, "which, with the bugle, thou hast fairly won, are thine own; we will make them fifty, if thou wilt take livery and service with us as a yeoman of our bodyguard, and be near to our person. For never did so strong a hand bend a bow, or so true an eye direct a shaft."

"Pardon me, noble Prince," said Locksley; "but I have vowed, that if ever I take service, it should be with your royal brother King Richard. These twenty nobles I leave to Hubert, who has this day drawn as brave a bow as his grandsire did at Hastings. Had his modesty not refused the trial, he would have hit the wand as well as I."

Hubert shook his head as he received with reluctance the bounty of the stranger, and Locksley, anxious to escape further observation, mixed with the crowd, and was seen no more.

II

[Prince John rode away to Ashby and held a banquet in hopes of conciliating every one. He soothed Cedric when the Normans had insulted him, and drank a health to "Sir Athelstane of Coningsburgh." Fitzurse tried to persuade Cedric to give a Norman toast in return, hoping that he would name Prince John; but Cedric quaffed his goblet to the health of "Richard the Lion-hearted." The banquet then broke up in confusion. Late that night Fitzurse finds De Bracy dressed up as an English yeoman archer, with the intention of waylaying Rowena on her way home and marrying her by force.

The story now returns to the Black Knight, who had left the tournament abruptly after making Ivanhoe's victory secure. He took his way northward, avoiding all frequented paths, and next day found himself on the frontiers of the West Riding of Yorkshire.] It became necessary towards evening to look out for some place in which to spend the night. He felt dissatisfied, therefore, when, looking around, he found himself deeply involved in woods, through which indeed there were many open glades, and some paths, but such as seemed only formed by the numerous herds of cattle which grazed in the forest, or by the animals of chase and the hunters who made prey of them.

The sun, by which the knight had chiefly directed his course, had now sunk behind the Derbyshire hills on his left, and every effort which he might make to pursue his journey was as likely to lead him out of his road as to advance him on his route. After having in vain endeavoured to select the most beaten path, in hopes it might lead to the cottage of some herdsman, or the silvan lodge of a forester, and having

repeatedly found himself totally unable to determine on a choice, the knight resolved to trust to the sagacity of his horse—experience having, on former occasions, made him acquainted with the wonderful talent possessed by these animals for extricating themselves and their riders on such emergencies.

The good steed, grievously fatigued with so long a day's journey under a rider cased in mail, had no sooner found, by the slackened reins, that he was abandoned to his own guidance, than he seemed to assume new strength and spirit; and whereas, formerly, he had scarce replied to the spur, otherwise than by a groan, he now, as if proud of the confidence reposed in him, pricked up his ears, and assumed, of his own accord, a more lively motion. The path which the animal adopted rather turned off from the course pursued by the knight during the day; but as the horse seemed confident in his choice, the rider abandoned himself to his discretion.

He was justified by the event; for the footpath soon after appeared a little wider and more worn, and the tinkle of a small bell gave the knight to understand that he was in the vicinity of some chapel or hermitage.

Accordingly, he soon reached an open plat of turf, on the opposite side of which a rock, rising abruptly from a gently sloping plain, offered its grey and weather-beaten front to the traveller. Ivy mantled its sides in some places, and in others oaks and holly bushes, whose roots found nourishment in the cliffs of the crag, waved over the precipices below, like the plumage of the warrior over his steel helmet, giving grace to that whose chief expression was terror. At the bottom of the rock, and leaning, as it were, against it, was constructed a rude hut, built chiefly of the trunks of trees felled in the neighbouring forest, and secured against the weather by having its crevices stuffed with moss mingled with clay. The

stem of a young fir-tree lopped of its branches, with a piece of wood tied across near the top, was planted upright by the door, as a rude emblem of the holy cross. At a little distance, on the right hand, a fountain of the purest water trickled out of the rock, and was received in a hollow stone, which labour had formed into a rustic basin. Escaping from thence, the stream murmured down the descent by a channel which its course had long worn, and so wandered through the little plain to lose itself in the neighbouring wood.

Beside this fountain were the ruins of a very small chapel, of which the roof had partly fallen in. The building, when entire, had never been above sixteen feet long by twelve feet in breadth, and the roof, low in proportion, rested upon four concentric arches which sprung from the four corners of the building, each supported upon a short and heavy pillar. The ribs of two of these arches remained, though the roof had fallen down betwixt them; over the others it remained entire. The entrance to this ancient place of devotion was under a very low round arch, ornamented by several courses of that zig-zag moulding resembling shark's teeth, which appears so often in the more ancient Saxon architecture. A belfry rose above the porch on four small pillars, within which hung the green and weather-beaten bell, the feeble sounds of which had been some time before heard by the Black Knight.

The whole peaceful and quiet scene lay glimmering in twilight before the eyes of the traveller, giving him good assurance of lodging for the night, since it was a special duty of those hermits who dwelt in the woods to exercise hospitality towards benighted or bewildered passengers.

Accordingly, the knight took no time to consider minutely the particulars which we have detailed, but thanking Saint Julian (the patron of travellers) who

had sent him good harbourage, he leaped from his horse and assailed the door of the hermitage with the butt of his lance, in order to arouse attention and gain admittance.

It was some time before he obtained any answer, and the reply, when made, was unpropitious.

"Pass on, whosoever thou art," was the answer given by a deep, hoarse voice from within the hut, "and disturb not the servant of God and St. Dunstan in his evening devotions."

"Worthy father," answered the knight, "here is a poor wanderer bewildered in these woods, who gives thee the opportunity of exercising thy charity and hospitality."

"Good brother," replied the inhabitant of the hermitage, "it has pleased Our Lady and St. Dunstan to destine me for the object of those virtues, instead of the exercise thereof. I have no provisions here which even a dog would share with me, and a horse of any tenderness of nurture would despise my couch; pass therefore on thy way, and God speed thee."

"But how," replied the knight, "is it possible for me to find my way through such a wood as this, when darkness is coming on? I pray you, reverend father, as you are a Christian, to undo your door, and at least point out to me my road."

"And I pray you, good Christian brother," replied the anchorite, "to disturb me no more. You have already interrupted one *pater*, two *aves*, and a *credo*, which I, miserable sinner that I am, should, according to my vow, have said before moonrise."

"The road—the road!" vociferated the knight, "give me directions for the road, if I am to expect no more from thee."

"The road," replied the hermit, "is easy to hit. The path from the woods leads to a morass, and from thence to a ford, which, as the rains have abated, may now be passable. When thou hast crossed the

ford, thou wilt take care of thy footing up the left bank, as it is somewhat precipitous; and the path, which hangs over the river, has lately, as I learn (for I seldom leave the duties of my chapel), given way in sundry places. Thou wilt then keep straight forward——"

"A broken path—a precipice—a ford, and a morass!" said the knight interrupting him. "Sir Hermit, if you were the holiest that ever wore beard or told bead, you shall scarce prevail on me to hold this road to-night. I tell thee that thou, who livest by the charity of the country—ill deserved, as I doubt it is—hast no right to refuse shelter to the wayfarer when in distress. Either open the door quickly, or, by the rood, I will beat it down and make entry for myself."

"Friend wayfarer," replied the hermit, "be not importunate. If thou puttest me to use the carnal weapon in mine own defence, it will be e'en the worse for you."

At this moment a distant noise of barking and growling, which the traveller had for some time heard, became extremely loud and furious, and made the knight suppose that the hermit, alarmed by his threat of making forcible entry, had called the dogs who made this clamour to aid him in his defence, out of some inner recess in which they had been kennelled. Incensed at this preparation on the hermit's part for making good his inhospitable purpose, the knight struck the door so furiously with his foot that posts as well as staples shook with violence.

The anchorite, not caring again to expose his door to a similar shock, now called out aloud, "Patience, patience—spare thy strength, good traveller, and I will presently undo the door, though, it may be, my doing so will be little to thy pleasure."

The door accordingly was opened, and the hermit, a large, strong-built man, in his sackcloth gown and

hood, girt with a rope of rushes, stood before the knight. He had in one hand a lighted torch, or link, and in the other a baton of crab-tree, so thick and heavy that it might well be termed a club. Two large shaggy dogs, half greyhound, half mastiff, stood ready to rush upon the traveller as soon as the door should be opened. But when the torch glanced upon the lofty crest and golden spurs of the knight who stood without, the hermit, altering probably his original intentions, repressed the rage of his auxiliaries, and, changing his tone to a sort of churlish courtesy, invited the knight to enter his hut, making excuse for his unwillingness to open his lodge after sunset, by alleging the multitude of robbers and outlaws who were abroad, and who gave no honour to Our Lady or St. Dunstan, nor to those holy men who spent life in their service.

"The poverty of your cell, good father," said the knight, looking around him, and seeing nothing but a bed of leaves, a crucifix rudely carved in oak, a missal, with a rough-hewn table and two stools, and one or two clumsy articles of furniture—"the poverty of your cell should seem a sufficient defence against any risk of thieves, not to mention the aid of two trusty dogs, large and strong enough, I think, to pull down a stag, and, of course, to match with most men."

"The good keeper of the forest," said the hermit, "hath allowed me the use of these animals, to protect my solitude until the times shall mend."

Having said this, he fixed his torch in a twisted branch of iron which served for a candlestick; and placing the oaken trivet before the embers of the fire, which he refreshed with some dry wood, he placed a stool upon one side of the table, and beckoned to the knight to do the same upon the other.

They sat down, and gazed with great gravity at each other, each thinking in his heart that he had

seldom seen a stronger or more athletic figure than was placed opposite to him.

"Reverend hermit," said the knight, after looking long and fixedly at his host, "were it not to interrupt your devout meditations, I would pray to know three things of your holiness: first, where I am to put my horse? secondly, what I can have for supper? thirdly, where I am to take up my couch for the night?"

"I will reply to you," said the hermit, "with my finger, it being against my rule to speak by words where signs can answer the purpose." So saying, he pointed successively to two corners of the hut. "Your stable," said he, "is there; your bed there; and," reaching down a platter with two handfuls of parched pease upon it from the neighbouring shelf, and placing it upon the table, he added, "your supper is here."

The knight shrugged his shoulders, and leaving the hut, brought in his horse (which in the interim he had fastened to a tree), unsaddled him with much attention, and spread upon the steed's weary back his own mantle.

The hermit was apparently somewhat moved to compassion by the anxiety as well as address which the stranger displayed in tending his horse; for, muttering something about provender left for the keeper's palfrey, he dragged out of a recess a bundle of forage, which he spread before the knight's charger, and immediately afterwards shook down a quantity of dried fern in the corner which he had assigned for the rider's couch. The knight returned him thanks for his courtesy; and, this duty done, both resumed their seats by the table, whereon stood the trencher of pease placed between them.

The hermit, after a long grace, which had once been Latin, but of which original language few traces remained, excepting here and there the long rolling

termination of some word or phrase, set example to his guest, by modestly putting into a very large mouth, furnished with teeth which might have ranked with those of a boar both in sharpness and whiteness, some three or four dried peas, a miserable grist as it seemed for so large and able a mill.

The knight, in order to follow so laudable an example, laid aside his helmet, his corselet, and the greater part of his armour, and showed to the hermit a head thick-curled with yellow hair, high features, blue eyes, remarkably bright and sparkling, a mouth well formed, having an upper lip clothed with moustaches darker than his hair, and bearing altogether the look of a bold, daring, and enterprising man, with which his strong form well corresponded.

The hermit, as if wishing to answer to the confidence of his guest, threw back his cowl, and showed a round bullet head belonging to a man in the prime of life. His close-shaven crown, surrounded by a circle of stiff curled black hair, had something the appearance of a parish pinfold begirt by its high hedge. The features expressed nothing of monastic austerity or of ascetic privations ; on the contrary, it was a bold, bluff countenance, with broad, black eyebrows, a well-turned forehead, and cheeks as round and vermilion as those of a trumpeter, from which descended a long and curly black beard. Such a visage, joined to the brawny form of the holy man, spoke rather of sirloins and haunches, than of pease and pulse. This incongruity did not escape the guest. After he had with great difficulty accomplished the mastication of a mouthful of the dried pease, he found it absolutely necessary to request his pious entertainer to furnish him with some liquor, who replied to his request by placing before him a large can of the purest water from the fountain.

" It is from the well of St. Dunstan," said he, " in which, betwixt sun and sun, he baptized five

hundred heathen Danes and Britons—blessed be his name!" And applying his black beard to the pitcher, he took a draught much more moderate in quantity than his encomium seemed to warrant.

"It seems to me, reverend father," said the knight, "that the small morsels which you eat, together with this holy but somewhat thin beverage, have thriven with you marvellously. You appear a man more fit to win the ram at a wrestling match, or the ring at a bout at quarter-staff, or the bucklers at a sword-play, than to linger out your time in this desolate wilderness, saying masses, and living upon parched pease and cold water."

"Sir Knight," answered the hermit, "your thoughts, like those of the ignorant laity, are according to the flesh. It has pleased Our Lady and my patron saint to bless the pittance to which I restrain myself, even as the pulse and water was blessed to the children Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, who drank the same rather than defile themselves with the wine and meats which were appointed them by the King of the Saracens."

"Holy father," said the knight, "upon whose countenance it hath pleased Heaven to work such a miracle, permit a sinful layman to crave thy name?"

"Thou mayest call me," answered the hermit, "the Clerk of Copmanhurst, for so I am termed in these parts. They add, it is true, the epithet holy; but I stand not upon that, as being unworthy of such addition.—And now, valiant knight, may I pray ye for the name of my honourable guest?"

"Truly," said the knight, "Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, men call me in these parts the Black Knight. Many, sir, add to it the epithet of Sluggard, whereby I am no way ambitious to be distinguished."

The hermit could scarcely forbear from smiling at his guest's reply.

"I see," said he, "Sir Sluggish Knight, that thou art a man of prudence and of counsel; and, moreover, I see that my poor monastic fare likes thee not, accustomed, perhaps, as thou hast been, to the license of courts and of camps and the luxuries of cities. And now I bethink me, Sir Sluggard, that when the charitable keeper of this forest-walk left those dogs for my protection, and also those bundles of forage, he left me also some food, which, being unfit for my use, the very recollection of it had escaped me amid my more weighty meditations."

"I dare be sworn he did so," said the knight; "I was convinced that there was better food in the cell, Holy Clerk, since you first doffed your cowl. Your keeper is ever a jovial fellow; and none who beheld thy grinders contending with these pease, and thy throat flooded with this ungenial element, could see thee doomed to such horse-provender and horse-beverage" (pointing to the provisions upon the table), "and refrain from mending thy cheer. Let us see the keeper's bounty, therefore, without delay."

The hermit cast a wistful look upon the knight, in which there was a sort of comic expression of hesitation, as if uncertain how far he should act prudently in trusting his guest. There was, however, as much of bold frankness in the knight's countenance as was possible to be expressed by features. His smile, too, had something in it irresistibly comic, and gave an assurance of faith and loyalty, with which his host could not refrain from sympathizing.

After exchanging a mute glance or two, the hermit went to the farther side of the hut, and opened a hutch, which was concealed with great care and some ingenuity. Out of the recesses of a dark closet, into which this aperture gave admittance, he brought a large pasty, baked in a pewter platter of unusual dimensions. This mighty dish he placed before his

guest, who, using his poniard to cut it open, lost no time in making himself acquainted with its contents.

"How long is it since the good keeper has been here?" said the knight to his host, after having swallowed several hasty morsels of this reinforcement to the hermit's good cheer.

"About two months," answered the father hastily.

"By the true Lord," answered the knight, "everything in your hermitage is miraculous, Holy Clerk! for I would have sworn that the fat buck which furnished this venison had been running on foot within the week."

The hermit was somewhat discountenanced by this observation; and, moreover, he made but a poor figure while gazing on the diminution of the pasty, on which his guest was making desperate inroads—a warfare in which his previous profession of abstinence left him no pretext for joining.

"I have been in Palestine, Sir Clerk," said the knight, stopping short of a sudden, "and I bethink me it is a custom there that every host who entertains a guest shall assure him of the wholesomeness of his food, by partaking of it along with him. Far be it from me to suspect so holy a man of aught inhospitable; nevertheless I will be highly bound to you would you comply with this Eastern custom."

"To ease your unnecessary scruples, Sir Knight, I will for once depart from my rule," replied the hermit. And as there were no forks in those days, his clutches were instantly in the bowels of the pasty.

The ice of ceremony being once broken, it seemed matter of rivalry between the guest and the entertainer which should display the best appetite; and although the former had probably fasted longest, yet the hermit fairly surpassed him.

"Holy Clerk," said the knight, when his hunger was appeased, "I would gage my good horse yonder against a zecchin, that that same honest keeper to

whom we are obliged for the venison has left thee a stoup of wine or a runlet of canary, or some such trifle, by way of ally to this noble pasty. This would be a circumstance, doubtless, totally unworthy to dwell in the memory of so rigid an anchorite ; yet, I think, were you to search yonder crypt once more, you would find that I am right in my conjecture."

The hermit only replied by a grin ; and returning to the hutch, he produced a leathern bottle, which might contain about four quarts. He also brought forth two large drinking cups, made out of the horn of the urus, and hooped with silver. Having made this goodly provision for washing down the supper, he seemed to think no further ceremonious scruple necessary on his part ; but filling both cups, and saying, in the Saxon fashion, "*Waes hael*, Sir Sluggish Knight ! " he emptied his own at a draught.

"*Drinc hael*, Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst ! " answered the warrior, and did his host reason in a similar brimmer.

" Holy Clerk," said the stranger, after the first cup was thus swallowed, " I cannot but marvel that a man possessed of such thews and sinews as thine, and who therewithal shows the talent of so goodly a trencher-man, should think of abiding by himself in this wilderness. In my judgment you are fitter to keep a castle or a fort, eating of the fat and drinking of the strong, than to live here upon pulse and water, or even upon the charity of the keeper. At least, were I as thou, I should find myself both disport and plenty out of the king's deer. There is many a goodly herd in these forests, and a buck will never be missed that goes to the use of Saint Dunstan's chaplain."

" Sir Sluggish Knight," replied the Clerk, " these are dangerous words, and I pray you to forbear them. I am true hermit to the king and law ; and were I to spoil my liege's game, I should be sure of the prison,

and, an my gown saved me not, were in some peril of hanging."

"Nevertheless, were I as thou," said the knight, "I would take my walk by moonlight, when foresters and keepers were warm in bed, and ever and anon, as I pattered my prayers, I would let fly a shaft among the herds of dun deer that feed in the glades. Resolve me, Holy Clerk, hast thou never practised such a pastime?"

"Friend Sluggard," answered the hermit, "thou hast seen all that can concern thee of my housekeeping, and something more than he deserves who takes up his quarters by violence. Credit me, it is better to enjoy the good which God sends thee, than to be impertinently curious how it comes. Fill thy cup, and welcome; and do not, I pray thee, by further impertinent inquiries, put me to show that thou couldst hardly have made good thy lodging had I been earnest to oppose thee."

"By my faith," said the knight, "thou makest me more curious than ever! Thou art the most mysterious hermit I ever met, and I will know more of thee ere we part. As for thy threats, know, holy man, thou speakest to one whose trade it is to find out danger wherever it is to be met with."

"Sir Sluggish Knight, I drink to thee," said the hermit; "respecting thy valour much, but deeming wondrous slightly of thy discretion. If thou wilt take equal arms with me, I will give thee, in all friendship and brotherly love, such sufficing penance and complete absolution, that thou shalt not for the next twelve months sin the sin of excess of curiosity."

The knight pledged him, and desired him to name his weapons.

"There is none," replied the hermit, "from the scissors of Delilah, and the tenpenny nail of Jael, to the scimitar of Goliath, at which I am not a match for thee. But, if I am to make the election, what sayest thou, good friend, to these trinkets?"

Thus speaking, he opened another hutch, and took out from it a couple of broadswords and bucklers, such as were used by the yeomanry of the period. The knight, who watched his motions, observed that this second place of concealment was furnished with two or three good long-bows, a cross-bow, a bundle of bolts for the latter, and half a dozen sheaves of arrows for the former. A harp, and other matters of a very uncanonical appearance, were also visible when this dark recess was opened.

"I promise thee, brother Clerk," said he, "I will ask thee no more offensive questions. The contents of that cupboard are an answer to all my inquiries; and I see a weapon there" (here he stooped and took out the harp) "on which I would more gladly prove my skill with thee, than at the sword and buckler."

"I hope, Sir Knight," said the hermit, "thou hast given no good reason for thy surname of the Sluggard. I do promise thee I suspect thee grievously. Nevertheless, thou art my guest, and I will not put thy manhood to the proof without thine own free will. Sit thee down, then, and fill thy cup; let us drink, sing, and be merry. If thou knowest ever a good lay, thou shalt be welcome to a nook of pasty at Copmanhurst so long as I serve the chapel of St. Dunstan, which, please God, shall be till I change my grey covering for one of green turf. But come, fill a flagon, for it will crave some time to tune the harp; and nought pitches the voice and sharpens the ear like a cup of wine. For my part, I love to feel the grape at my very finger-ends, before they make the harp-strings tinkle."

Notwithstanding the prescription of the genial hermit, with which his guest willingly complied, he found it no easy matter to bring the harp to harmony.

"Methinks, holy father," said he, "the instrument wants one string, and the rest have been somewhat misused."

"Ay, mark'st thou that?" replied the hermit; "that shows thee a master of the craft. Wine and wassail," he added, gravely casting up his eyes—"all the fault of wine and wassail! I told Allan-a-dale, the northern minstrel, that he would damage the harp if he touched it after the seventh cup; but he would not be controlled. Friend, I drink to thy successful performance."

So saying, he took off his cup with much gravity, at the same time shaking his head at the intemperance of the Scottish harper.

The knight in the meantime had brought the strings into some order, and after a short prelude, asked his host whether he would choose a *sirvente* in the language of *oc*, or a *lai* in the language of *oui*, or a *virelai*, or a ballad in the vulgar English.

"A ballad, a ballad," said the hermit, "against all the *ocs* and *ouis* of France. Downright English am I, Sir Knight, and downright English was my patron St. Dunstan, and scorned *oc* and *oui*, as he would have scorned the parings of the devil's hoof—downright English alone shall be sung in this cell."

"I will assay, then," said the knight, "a ballad composed by a Saxon gleeman, whom I knew in Holy Land."

It speedily appeared that if the knight was not a complete master of the minstrel art, his taste for it had at least been cultivated under the best instructors. Art had taught him to soften the faults of a voice which had little compass, and was naturally rough rather than mellow, and, in short, had done all that culture can do in supplying natural deficiencies. His performance, therefore, might have been termed very respectable by abler judges than the hermit, especially as the knight threw into the notes now a degree of spirit, and now of plaintive enthusiasm, which gave force and energy to the verses which he sung.

THE CRUSADER'S RETURN

I

High deeds achieved of knightly fame,
From Palestine the champion came ;
The cross upon his shoulders borne,
Battle and blast had dimm'd and torn.
Each dint upon his batter'd shield
Was token of a foughten field ;
And thus, beneath his lady's bower,
He sung, as fell the twilight hour :—

II

"Joy to the fair !—thy knight behold,
Return'd from yonder land of gold ;
No wealth he brings, nor wealth can need,
Save his good arms and battle-steed ;
His spurs, to dash against a foe,
His lance and sword to lay him low ;
Such all the trophies of his toil,
Such—and the hope of Tekla's smile !

III

" Joy to the fair ! whose constant knight
Her favour fired to feats of might ;
Unnoted shall she not remain,
Where meet the bright and noble train ;
Minstrel shall sing and herald tell—
' Mark yonder maid of beauty well,
'Tis she for whose bright eyes was won
The listed field at Askalon !

IV

" ' Note well her smile !—it edged the blade
Which fifty wives to widows made,
When, vain his strength and Mahound's spell,
Iconium's turban'd Soldan fell.
Seest thou her locks, whose sunny glow
Half shows, half shades, her neck of snow ?
Twines not of them one golden thread,
But for its sake a Paynim bled.'

v

"Joy to the fair !—my name unknown,
Each deed, and all its praise thine own ;
Then, oh ! unbar this churlish gate,
The night dew falls, the hour is late.
Inured to Syria's glowing breath,
I feel the north breeze chill as death ;
Let grateful love quell maiden shame,
And grant him bliss who brings thee fame."

During this performance the hermit demeaned himself much like a first-rate critic of the present day at a new opera. He reclined back upon his seat, with his eyes half-shut ; now, folding his hands and twisting his thumbs, he seemed absorbed in attention, and anon, balancing his expanded palms, he gently flourished them in time to the music. At one or two favourite cadences, he threw in a little assistance of his own, where the knight's voice seemed unable to carry the air so high as his worshipful taste approved. When the song was ended, the anchorite emphatically declared it a good one, and well sung.

"And yet," said he, "I think my Saxon countrymen had herded long enough with the Normans, to fall into the tone of their melancholy ditties. What took the honest knight from home ? or what could he expect but to find his mistress agreeably engaged with a rival on his return, and his serenade, as they call it, as little regarded as the caterwauling of a cat in the gutter ? Nevertheless, Sir Knight, I drink this cup to thee, to the success of all true lovers. I fear you are none," he added, on observing that the knight (whose brain began to be heated with these repeated draughts) qualified his flagon from the water pitcher.

"Why," said the knight, "did you not tell me that this water was from the well of your blessed patron, St. Dunstan ? "

"Ay, truly," said the hermit; "and many a hundred of pagans did he baptize there, but I never heard that he drank any of it. Everything should be put to its proper use in this world. St. Dunstan knew, as well as any one, the prerogatives of a jovial friar."

And so saying, he reached the harp, and entertained his guest with the following characteristic song, to a sort of derry-down chorus, appropriate to an old English ditty.

THE BAREFOOTED FRIAR

I

I'll give thee, good fellow, a twelvemonth or twain,
To search Europe through, from Byzantium to Spain;
But ne'er shall you find, should you search till you tire,
So happy a man as the Barefooted Friar.

II

Your knight for his lady pricks forth in career,
And is brought home at evensong prick'd through with a spear;
I confess him in haste, for his lady desires
No comfort on earth save the Barefooted Friar's.

III

Your monarch?—Pshaw! many a prince has been known
To barter his robes for our cowl and our gown,
But which of us e'er felt the idle desire
To exchange for a crown the grey hood of a Friar?

IV

The Friar has walk'd out, and where'er he has gone,
The land and its fatness is mark'd for his own;
He can roam where he lists, he can stop when he tires,
For every man's house is the Barefooted Friar's.

V

He's expected at noon, and no wight till he comes
May profane the great chair, or the porridge of plums;
For the best of the cheer, and the seat by the fire,
Is the undenied right of the Barefooted Friar.

VI

He's expected at night, and the pasty's made hot,
They broach the brown ale, and they fill the black pot;
And the goodwife would wish the goodman in the mire,
Ere he lack'd a soft pillow, the Barefooted Friar.

VII

Long flourish the sandal, the cord, and the cope,
The dread of the devil and trust of the Pope;
For to gather life's roses, unscathed by the briar,
Is granted alone to the Barefooted Friar.

"By my troth," said the knight, "thou hast sung well and lustily, and in high praise of thine order. And, talking of the devil, Holy Clerk, are you not afraid that he may pay you a visit during some of your uncanonical pastimes?"

"I uncanonical!" answered the hermit; "I scorn the charge—I scorn it with my heels! I serve the duty of my chapel duly and truly. Two masses daily, morning and evening, primes, noons, and vespers, *aves*, *credos*, *paters*——"

"Excepting moonlight nights, when the venison is in season," said his guest.

"*Exceptis excipiendis*," replied the hermit, "as our old abbot taught me to say, when impertient laymen should ask me if I kept every punctilio of mine order."

He changed the conversation; fast and furious grew the mirth of the parties, and many a song was interchanged between them; when their revels were interrupted by a loud knocking at the door of the hermitage.

III

[The occasion of this interruption we can only explain by resuming the adventures of our Saxon friends. When Cedric saw his son Wilfred of Ivanhoe drop down senseless in the lists at Ashby, he sent his cupbearer Oswald to attend to him. The young knight, however, had disappeared; Oswald found only Gurth the deserter, and Cedric in great anger ordered the swineherd to be put in fetters. The Saxon party then set out for home; and when they reached the forest they came on a lady crying for help, who proved to be Rebecca, with her old father, and a sick friend in a litter. Their escort had run away, and they were in danger from bandits. Rowena persuaded Cedric to help them on their way; but the whole cavalcade were soon afterwards attacked and captured after a sharp fight—Gurth and Wamba alone escaping. These two began to plan a rescue, but were themselves halted by a forester whom they recognized for Locksley the yeoman. He heard their story, promised them aid, and led them into the depths of the forest.]

It was after three hours' good walking that the servants of Cedric, with their mysterious guide, arrived at a small opening in the forest, in the centre of which grew an oak-tree of enormous magnitude, throwing its twisted branches in every direction. Beneath this tree four or five yeomen lay stretched on the ground, while another, as sentinel, walked to and fro in the moonlight shade.

Upon hearing the sound of feet approaching, the watch instantly gave the alarm, and the sleepers as suddenly started up and bent their bows. Six arrows placed on the string were pointed towards the quarter from which the travellers approached, when their guide, being recognized, was welcomed with every

token of respect and attachment, and all signs and fears of a rough reception at once subsided.

"Where is the Miller?" was his first question.

"On the road towards Rotherham."

"With how many?" demanded the leader, for such he seemed to be.

"With six men, and good hope of booty, if it please St. Nicholas."

"Devoutly spoken," said Locksley—"and where is Allan-a-dale?"

"Walked up towards the Watling-street, to watch for the Prior of Jorvaulx."

"That is well thought on also," replied the Captain; —"and where is the Friar?"

"In his cell."

"Thither will I go," said Locksley. "Disperse and seek your companions. Collect what force you can, for there's game afoot that must be hunted hard, and will turn to bay. Meet me here by daybreak. And stay," he added, "I have forgotten what is most necessary of the whole—two of you take the road quickly towards Torquilstone, the castle of Front-de-Bœuf. A set of gallants, who have been masquerading in such guise as our own, are carrying a band of prisoners thither. Watch them closely, for even if they reach the castle before we collect our force, our honour is concerned to punish them, and we will find means to do so. Keep a close watch on them therefore; and dispatch one of your comrades, the lightest of foot, to bring the news of the yeomen thereabout."

They promised implicit obedience, and departed with alacrity on their different errands. In the meanwhile, their leader and his two companions, who now looked upon him with great respect, as well as some fear, pursued their way to the Chapel of Copmanhurst.

When they had reached the little moonlight glade, having in front the reverend though ruinous chapel, and the rude hermitage, so well suited to ascetic

devotion, Wamba whispered to Gurth, "If this be the habitation of a thief, it makes good the old proverb, The nearer the church the farther from God.—And by my cockscomb," he added, "I think it be even so—hearken but to the black sanctus which they are singing in the hermitage!"

In fact the anchorite and his guest were performing at the full extent of their very powerful lungs, an old drinking song, of which this was the burden :—

"Come, trowl the brown bowl to me,
Bully boy, bully boy,
Come, trowl the brown bowl to me :
Ho! jolly Jenkin, I spy a knave in drinking,
Come, trowl the brown bowl to me."

"Now, that is not ill sung," said Wamba, who had thrown in a few of his own flourishes to help out the chorus. "But who, in the saint's name, ever expected to have heard such a jolly chant come from out a hermit's cell at midnight!"

"Marry, that should I," said Gurth, "for the jolly Clerk of Copmanhurst is a known man, and kills half the deer that are stolen in this walk. Men say that the keeper has complained to his official, and that he will be stripped of his cowl and cope altogether, if he keep not better order."

While they were thus speaking, Locksley's loud and repeated knocks had at length disturbed the anchorite and his guest. "By my beads," said the hermit, stopping short in a grand flourish, "here come more benighted guests. I would not for my cowl that they found us in this goodly exercise. All men have their enemies, good Sir Sluggard; and there be those malignant enough to construe the hospitable refreshment which I have been offering to you, a weary traveller, for the matter of three short hours, into sheer drunkenness and debauchery, vices alike alien to my profession and my disposition."

"Base calumniators!" replied the knight; "I would I had the chastising of them. Nevertheless, Holy Clerk, it is true that all have their enemies; and there be those in this very land whom I would rather speak to through the bars of my helmet than bare-faced."

"Get thine iron pot on thy head then, friend Sluggard, as quickly as thy nature will permit," said the hermit, "while I remove these pewter flagons, whose late contents run strangely in mine own pate; and to drown the clatter—for, in faith, I feel somewhat unsteady—strike into the tune which thou hearest me sing. It is no matter for the words—I scarce know them myself."

So saying, he struck up a thundering *De profundis clamavi*, under cover of which he removed the apparatus of their banquet; while the knight, laughing heartily, and arming himself all the while, assisted his host with his voice from time to time as his mirth permitted.

"What devil's matins are you after at this hour?" said a voice from without.

"Heaven forgive you, Sir Traveller!" said the hermit, whose own noise, and perhaps his nocturnal potations, prevented from recognizing accents which were tolerably familiar to him. "Wend on your way, in the name of God and Saint Dunstan, and disturb not the devotions of me and my holy brother."

"Mad priest," answered the voice from without, "open to Locksley!"

"All's safe—all's right," said the hermit to his companion.

"But who is he?" said the Black Knight; "it imports me much to know."

"Who is he?" answered the hermit; "I tell thee he is a friend."

"But what friend?" answered the knight; "for he may be friend to thee and none of mine."

" What friend ? " replied the hermit ; " that, now, is one of the questions that is more easily asked than answered. What friend ?—why, he is, now that I bethink me a little, the very same honest keeper I told thee of a while since."

" Ay, as honest a keeper as thou art a pious hermit," replied the knight, " I doubt it not. But undo the door to him before he beat it from its hinges."

The dogs, in the meantime, which had made a dreadful baying at the commencement of the disturbance, seemed now to recognize the voice of him who stood without ; for, totally changing their manner, they scratched and whined at the door, as if interceding for his admission. The hermit speedily unbolted his portal, and admitted Locksley, with his two companions.

" Why, hermit," was the yeoman's first question as soon as he beheld the knight, " what boon companion hast thou here ? "

" A brother of our order," replied the friar, shaking his head ; " we have been at our orisons all night."

" He is a monk of the church militant, I think," answered Locksley ; " and there be more of them abroad. I tell thee, friar, thou must lay down the rosary and take up the quarter-staff ; we shall need every one of our merry men, whether clerk or layman. But," he added, taking him a step aside, " art thou mad, to give admittance to a knight thou dost not know ? Hast thou forgot our articles ? "

" Not know him ! " replied the friar boldly ; " I know him as well as the beggar knows his dish."

"And what is his name, then ? " demanded Locksley.

" His name," said the hermit—" his name is Sir Anthony of Scrabelstone. As if I would drink with a man, and did not know his name ! "

" Thou hast been drinking more than enough, friar," said the woodsman, " and, I fear, prating more than enough too."

"Good yeoman," said the knight, coming forward, "be not wroth with my merry host. He did but afford me the hospitality which I would have compelled from him if he had refused it."

"Thou compel!" said the friar. "Wait but till I have changed this grey gown for a green cassock, and if I make not a quarter-staff ring twelve upon thy pate, I am neither true clerk nor good woodsman."

While he spoke thus, he stripped off his gown, and appeared in a close black buckram doublet and drawers, over which he speedily did on a cassock of green, and hose of the same colour. "I pray thee truss my points," said he to Wamba, "and thou shalt have a cup of sack for thy labour."

"Gramercy for thy sack," said Wamba; "but think'st thou it is lawful for me to aid you to transmew thyself from a holy hermit into a sinful forester?"

"Never fear," said the hermit; "I will but confess the sins of my green cloak to my grey friar's frock, and all shall be well again."

"Amen!" answered the Jester; "a broadcloth penitent should have a sackcloth confessor, and your frock may absolve my motley doublet into the bargain."

So saying, he accommodated the friar with his assistance in tying the endless number of points, as the laces which attached the hose to the doublet were then termed.

While they were thus employed, Locksley led the knight a little apart, and addressed him thus:—"Deny it not, Sir Knight—you are he who decided the victory to the advantage of the English against the strangers on the second day of the tournament at Ashby."

"And what follows if you guess truly, good yeoman?" replied the knight.

"I should in that case hold you," replied the yeoman, "a friend to the weaker party."

" Such is the duty of a true knight at least," replied the Black Champion ; " and I would not willingly that there were reason to think otherwise of me."

" But for my purpose," said the yeoman, " thou shouldst be as well a good Englishman as a good knight ; for that which I have to speak of concerns, indeed, the duty of every honest man, but is more especially that of a true-born native of England."

" You can speak to no one," replied the knight, " to whom England, and the life of every Englishman, can be dearer than to me."

" I would willingly believe so," said the woodsman, " for never had this country such need to be supported by those who love her. Hear me, and I will tell thee of an enterprise in which, if thou be'st really that which thou seemest, thou mayest take an honourable part. A band of villains, in the disguise of better men than themselves, have made themselves master of the person of a noble Englishman, called Cedric the Saxon, together with his ward, and his friend Athelstane of Coningsburgh, and have transported them to a castle in this forest, called Torquilstone. I ask of thee, as a good knight and a good Englishman, wilt thou aid in their rescue ? "

" I am bound by my vow to do so," replied the knight ; " but I would willingly know who you are who request my assistance in their behalf ? "

" I am," said the forester, " a nameless man ; but I am the friend of my country, and of my country's friends. With this account of me you must for the present remain satisfied, the more especially since you yourself desire to continue unknown. Believe, however, that my word, when pledged, is as inviolate as if I wore golden spurs."

" I willingly believe it," said the knight. " I have been accustomed to study men's countenances, and I can read in thine honesty and resolution. I will therefore ask thee no further questions, but aid thee in

setting at freedom these oppressed captives; which done, I trust we shall part better acquainted, and well satisfied with each other."

"So," said Wamba to Gurth—for the friar being now fully equipped, the Jester, having approached to the other side of the hut, had heard the conclusion of the conversation—"so we have got a new ally? I trust the valour of the knight will be truer metal than the religion of the hermit, or the honesty of the yeoman; for this Locksley looks like a born deer-stealer, and the priest like a lusty hypocrite."

"Hold thy peace, Wamba," said Gurth. "It may all be as thou dost guess; but were the horned devil to rise and proffer me his assistance to set at liberty Cedric and the Lady Rowena, I fear I should hardly have religion enough to refuse the foul fiend's offer, and bid him get behind me."

The friar was now completely accoutred as a yeoman, with sword and buckler, bow, and quiver, and a strong partisan over his shoulder. He left his cell at the head of the party, and, having carefully locked the door, deposited the key under the threshold.

"Art thou in condition to do good service, friar," said Locksley, "or does the brown bowl still run in thy head?"

"Not more than a draught of St. Dunstan's fountain will allay," answered the priest; "something there is of a whizzing in my brain, and of instability in my legs, but you shall presently see both pass away."

So saying, he stepped to the stone basin, in which the waters of the fountain as they fell formed bubbles which danced in the white moonlight, and took so long a draught as if he had meant to exhaust the spring.

"When didst thou drink as deep a draught of water before, Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst?" said the Black Knight.

" Never since my wine-butt leaked, and let out its liquor by an illegal vent," replied the friar, " and so left me nothing to drink but my patron's bounty here."

Then plunging his hands and head into the fountain, he washed from them all marks of the midnight revel.

Thus refreshed and sobered, the jolly priest twirled his heavy partisan round his head with three fingers, as if he had been balancing a reed, exclaiming at the same time, " Where be those false ravishers, who carry off wenches against their will ? May the foul fiend fly off with me, if I am not man enough for a dozen of them."

" Swearest thou, Holy Clerk ? " said the Black Knight.

" Clerk me no Clerks," replied the transformed priest ; " by Saint George and the Dragon, I am no longer a shaveling than while my frock is on my back. When I am cased in my green cassock, I will drink, swear, and woo a lass, with any blithe forester in the West Riding."

" Come on, Jack Priest," said Locksley, " and be silent ; thou art as noisy as a whole convent on a holy eve, when the Father Abbot has gone to bed.—Come on you, too, my masters ; tarry not to talk of it. I say, come on ; we must collect all our forces, and few enough we shall have, if we are to storm the castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf."

" What ! is it Front-de-Bœuf," said the Black Knight, " who has stopped on the king's highway the king's liege subjects ? Is he turned thief and oppressor ? "

" Oppressor he ever was," said Locksley.

" And for thief," said the priest, " I doubt if ever he were even half so honest a man as many a thief of my acquaintance."

" Move on, priest, and be silent," said the yeoman. " It were better you led the way to the place of rendezvous, than say what should be left unsaid, both in decency and prudence."

IV

[In the meantime the pretended outlaws under De Bracy and Bois-Guilbert succeeded in bringing their captives to Torquilstone, the castle of Front-de-Bœuf. There they placed them in separate rooms, Cedric and Athelstane only being allowed to remain together. At dinner time Athelstane sent a challenge to Front-de-Bœuf, who ignored it, and proceeded to extort money from Isaac by threats of torture. In this he was interrupted by the sound of a bugle blown outside the castle. The same alarm also broke in upon two other scenes, in which De Bracy was wooing Rowena and Bois-Guilbert was vainly persuading Rebecca to fly with him. The Normans all hastened to the hall of the castle. "Let us see the cause of this cursed clamour," said Front-de-Bœuf; "here is a letter, and if I mistake not it is in Saxon."

The Templar read it for him: it was a formal letter of defiance, and appeared to them either a foolish jest or the most extraordinary cartel that ever was sent across the drawbridge of a baronial castle. It was from Wamba the jester and Gurth the swineherd, with their allies and confederates, the good knight, called for the present *Le Noir Faineant* (the Black Knight), and the stout yeoman, Robert Locksley, called Cleave-the-wand; it called upon Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, and his allies and accomplices whomsoever, to deliver up all the prisoners and their property within an hour, or in default to be held as robbers and traitors, under wager of battle and siege: and it was signed by *Le Noir Faineant,* with a cock's head and comb, a cross, and an arrow, for his three companions.

Front-de-Bœuf, greatly enraged, replied to this that he intended to execute his prisoners before noon

that day, and therefore demanded that a priest be sent into the castle to reconcile them with God. The Black Knight accordingly proposed to send the hermit of Copmanhurst ; but as he refused, Wamba offered to go instead, hoping by the aid of a friar's frock and the words *Pax vobiscum* to be received as a holy father and gain some information from Cedric as to the state of affairs inside the castle. In this he was successful, and he persuaded Cedric to take his frock and cowl, and escape by means of the same words *Pax vobiscum.* But on his way through the castle Cedric was intercepted by an old hag named Urfried, or Ulrica, who was in reality the daughter of the former Saxon lord of Torquilstone. Front-de-Bœuf had loved her once, but afterwards ill treated her, and she was longing for revenge on the Normans. She had recognized Cedric by his voice for one of her own people, and begged him to give her absolution for her years of treachery. He refused in horror, and made his way out, while she determined to follow her fate and wreak a terrible justice on Front-de-Bœuf. Wamba was, of course, discovered almost immediately after Cedric's escape, and was condemned by Front-de-Bœuf to a cruel death ; but at this moment the Black Knight's party began an assault on the outer works of the castle, and the Normans all hastened to man the defences. The fighting was desperate ; Locksley and his bowmen picked off those on the battlements, and when Front-de-Bœuf made a sortie he was struck down by the huge axe of the Black Knight. Ivanhoe, lying wounded in a turret room, could see nothing of the battle, but Rebecca stood by the window and described it all to him. At last, when the defenders had destroyed the drawbridge and the attack seemed to be checked, Ulrica came to the room where Front-de-Bœuf lay dying, and after reminding him of his crimes and taunting him with his helplessness, she announced that she had

fired the magazine of fuel beneath his chamber, and left him locked in, with the smoke rolling up through the floor.

In the meantime the Black Knight had bridged the moat with a raft, and was storming in at the gate. De Bracy and Bois-Guilbert made a sally: De Bracy was struck down and captured by the Black Knight, but the Templar with some of his Saracens and men-at-arms escaped on horseback, carrying off Rebecca, and smiting down Athelstane, who was taken up lifeless. The Black Knight carried Ivanhoe out of the castle, and then Ulrica appeared on a turret, chanting a Saxon death-song until the turret gave way with a crash and she perished in the flames. The voice of Locksley was then heard, "Shout, yeomen!—the den of tyrants is no more! Let each bring his spoil to our chosen place of rendezvous at the Trysting-tree in the Harthill-walk; for there, at break of day, will we make just partition among our own bands, together with our worthy allies in this great deed of vengeance."]

The daylight had dawned upon the glades of the oak forest. The green boughs glittered with all their pearls of dew. The hind led her fawn from the covert of high fern to the more open walks of the greenwood, and no huntsman was there to watch or intercept the stately hart, as he paced at the head of the antlered herd.

The outlaws were all assembled around the Trysting tree in the Harthill-walk, where they had spent the night in refreshing themselves after the fatigues of the siege, some with wine, some with slumber, many with hearing and recounting the events of the day, and computing the heaps of plunder which their success had placed at the disposal of their chief.

The spoils were indeed very large; for, notwithstanding that much was consumed, a great deal of plate, rich armour, and splendid clothing had been

secured by the exertions of the dauntless outlaws, who could be appalled by no danger when such rewards were in view. Yet so strict were the laws of their society, that no one ventured to appropriate any part of the booty, which was brought into one common mass, to be at the disposal of their leader.

The place of rendezvous was an aged oak; not, however, the same to which Locksley had conducted Gurth and Wamba in the earlier part of the story, but one which was the centre of a silvan amphitheatre, within half a mile of the demolished castle of Torquilstone. Here Locksley assumed his seat—a throne of turf erected under the twisted branches of the huge oak; and the silvan followers were gathered around him. He assigned to the Black Knight a seat at his right hand, and to Cedric a place upon his left.

"Pardon my freedom, noble sirs," he said, "but in these glades I am monarch—they are my kingdom; and these my wild subjects would reck but little of my power, were I, within my own dominions, to yield place to mortal man.—Now, sirs, who hath seen our chaplain? where is our curtal Friar? A mass amongst Christian men best begins a busy morning." No one had seen the Clerk of Copmanhurst. "Over gods forbode!" said the outlaw chief, "I trust the jolly priest hath but abidden by the wine-pot a thought too late. Who saw him since the castle was ta'en?"

"I," quoth the Miller, "marked him busy about the door of a cellar, swearing by each saint in the calendar he would taste the smack of Front-de-Bœuf's Gascoigne wine."

"Now, the saints, as many as there be of them," said the Captain, "forefend, lest he has drunk too deep of the wine-butts, and perished by the fall of the castle!—Away, Miller! take with you enow of men, seek the place where you last saw him—throw water from the moat on the scorching ruins—I will have them removed stone by stone ere I lose my curtal Friar."

The numbers who hastened to execute this duty, considering that an interesting division of spoil was about to take place, showed how much the troop had at heart the safety of their spiritual father.

"Meanwhile, let us proceed," said Locksley; "for when this bold deed shall be sounded abroad, the bands of De Bracy, of Malvoisin, and other allies of Front-de-Bœuf will be in motion against us, and it were well for our safety that we retreat from the vicinity.—Noble Cedric," he said, turning to the Saxon, "that spoil is divided into two portions; do thou make choice of that which best suits thee, to recompense thy people who were partakers with us in this adventure."

"Good yeoman," said Cedric, "my heart is oppressed with sadness. The noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh is no more—the last sprout of the sainted Confessor! Hopes have perished with him which can never return! A sparkle hath been quenched by his blood which no human breath can again rekindle! My people, save the few who are now with me, do but tarry my presence to transport his honoured remains to their last mansion. The lady Rowena is desirous to return to Rotherwood, and must be escorted by a sufficient force. I should, therefore, ere now, have left this place; and I waited—not to share the booty, for, so help me God and Saint Withold! as neither I nor any of mine will touch the value of a liard,—I waited but to render my thanks to thee and to thy bold yeomen, for the life and honour ye have saved."

The tramp of horses was now heard, and the Lady Rowena appeared, surrounded by several riders, and a much stronger party of footmen, who joyfully shook their pikes and clashed their brown-bills for joy of her freedom. She herself, richly attired, and mounted on a dark chestnut palfrey, had recovered all the dignity of her manner, and only an unwonted degree of paleness showed the sufferings she had undergone.

Her lovely brow, though sorrowful, bore on it a cast of reviving hope for the future, as well as of grateful thankfulness for the past deliverance. She knew that Ivanhoe was safe, and she knew that Athelstane was dead. The former assurance filled her with the most sincere delight; and if she did not absolutely rejoice at the latter, she might be pardoned for feeling the full advantage of being freed from further persecution on the only subject in which she had ever been contradicted by her guardian Cedric.

As Rowena bent her steed towards Locksley's seat, that bold yeoman, with all his followers, rose to receive her, as if by a general instinct of courtesy. The blood rose to her cheeks, as, courteously waving her hand, and bending so low that her beautiful and loose tresses were for an instant mixed with the flowing mane of her palfrey, she expressed in few but apt words her obligations and her gratitude to Locksley and her other deliverers. "God bless you, brave men," she concluded. "God and Our Lady bless you and requite you for gallantly perilling yourselves in the cause of the oppressed! If any of you should hunger, remember Rowena has food; if you should thirst, she has many a butt of wine and brown ale. And if the Normans drive ye from these walks, Rowena has forests of her own, where her gallant deliverers may range at full freedom, and never ranger ask whose arrow hath struck down the deer."

Cedric, ere they departed, expressed his peculiar gratitude to the Black Champion, and earnestly entreated him to accompany him to Rotherwood.

"I know," he said, "that ye errant knights desire to carry your fortunes on the point of your lance, and reck not of land or goods; but war is a changeful mistress, and a home is sometimes desirable even to the champion whose trade is wandering. Thou hast earned one in the halls of Rotherwood, noble knight. Cedric has wealth enough to repair the injuries of for-

tune, and all he has is his deliverer's. Come, therefore, to Rotherwood, not as a guest, but as a son or brother."

"Cedric has already made me rich," said the Knight —"he has taught me the value of Saxon virtue. To Rotherwood will I come, brave Saxon, and that speedily; but, as now, pressing matters of moment detain me from your halls. Peradventure when I come hither, I will ask such a boon as will put even thy generosity to the test."

"It is granted ere spoken out," said Cedric, striking his ready hand into the gauntleted palm of the Black Knight—"it is granted already, were it to affect half my fortune."

"Gage not thy promise so lightly," said the Knight of the Fetterlock; "yet well I hope to gain the boon I shall ask. Meanwhile, adieu."

"I have but to say," added the Saxon, "that, during the funeral rites of the noble Athelstane, I shall be an inhabitant of the halls of his castle of Coningsburgh. They will be open to all who choose to partake of the funeral banqueting; and, I speak in name of the noble Edith, mother of the fallen prince, they will never be shut against him who laboured so bravely, though unsuccessfully, to save Athelstane from Norman chains and Norman steel."

"Ay, ay," said Wamba, who had resumed his attendance on his master, "rare feeding there will be —pity that the noble Athelstane cannot banquet at his own funeral. But he," continued the Jester, lifting up his eyes gravely, "is supping in Paradise, and doubtless does honour to the cheer."

"Peace, and move on," said Cedric, his anger at this untimely jest being checked by the recollection of Wamba's recent services. Rowena waved a graceful adieu to him of the Fetterlock, the Saxon bade God speed him, and on they moved through a wide glade of the forest.

They had scarce departed ere a sudden procession

moved from under the greenwood branches, swept slowly round the silvan amphitheatre, and took the same direction with Rowena and her followers. The priests of a neighbouring convent, in expectation of the ample donation, or *soul-scat*, which Cedric had propined, attended upon the car in which the body of Athelstane was laid, and sang hymns as it was sadly and slowly borne on the shoulders of his vassals to his castle of Coningsburgh, to be there deposited in the grave of Hengist, from whom the deceased derived his long descent. Many of his vassals had assembled at the news of his death, and followed the bier with all the external marks, at least, of dejection and sorrow. Again the outlaws arose, and paid the same rude and spontaneous homage to death, which they had so lately rendered to beauty. The slow chant and mournful step of the priests brought back to their remembrance such of their comrades as had fallen in the yesterday's affray. But such recollections dwell not long with those who lead a life of danger and enterprise, and ere the sound of the death-hymn had died on the wind, the outlaws were again busied in the distribution of their spoil.

"Valiant knight," said Locksley to the Black Champion, "without whose good heart and mighty arm our enterprise must altogether have failed, will it please you to take from that mass of spoil whatever may best serve to pleasure you, and to remind you of this my Trysting-tree?"

"I accept the offer," said the Knight, "as frankly as it is given, and I ask permission to dispose of Sir Maurice de Bracy at my own pleasure."

"He is thine already," said Locksley, "and well for him! else the tyrant had graced the highest bough of this oak, with as many of his Free Companions as we could gather, hanging thick as acorns around him. But he is thy prisoner, and he is safe, though he had slain my father."

"De Bracy," said the Knight, "thou art free—

depart. He whose prisoner thou art scorns to take mean revenge for what is past. But beware of the future, lest a worse thing befall thee. Maurice de Bracy, I say BEWARE!"

De Bracy bowed low and in silence, and was about to withdraw, when the yeomen burst at once into a shout of execration and derision. The proud knight instantly stopped, turned back, folded his arms, drew up his form to its full height, and exclaimed, "Peace, ye yelping curs! who open upon a cry which ye followed not when the stag was at bay—De Bracy scorns your censure as he would disdain your applause. To your brakes and caves, ye outlawed thieves! and be silent when aught knightly or noble is but spoken within a league of your fox-earths."

This ill-timed defiance might have procured for De Bracy a volley of arrows, but for the hasty and imperative interference of the outlaw chief. Meanwhile the knight caught a horse by the rein, for several which had been taken in the stables of Front-de-Bœuf stood accoutred around, and were a valuable part of the booty. He threw himself upon the saddle, and galloped off through the wood.

When the bustle occasioned by this incident was somewhat composed, the chief Outlaw took from his neck the rich horn and baldric which he had recently gained at the strife of archery near Ashby.

"Noble knight," he said to him of the Fetterlock, "if you disdain not to grace by your acceptance a bugle which an English yeoman has once worn, this I will pray you to keep as a memorial of your gallant bearing; and if ye have aught to do, and, as happeneth oft to a gallant knight, ye chance to be hard bestead in any forest between Trent and Tees, wind three mots upon the horn thus, *Wa-sa-hoa!* and it may well chance ye shall find helpers and rescue."

mot, a note on the horn or bugle.

He then gave breath to the bugle, and winded once and again the call which he described, until the knight had caught the notes.

"Gramercy for the gift, bold yeoman," said the Knight; "and better help than thine and thy rangers would I never seek, were it at my utmost need." And then in his turn he winded the call till all the greenwood rang.

"Well blown and clearly," said the yeoman; "beshrew me an thou knowest not as much of woodcraft as of war! Thou hast been a striker of deer in thy day, I warrant.—Comrades, mark these three mots—it is the call of the Knight of the Fetterlock; and he who hears it, and hastens not to serve him at his need, I will have him scourged out of our band with his own bowstring."

"Long live our leader!" shouted the yeomen, "and long live the Black Knight of the Fetterlock! May he soon use our service, to prove how readily it will be paid."

Locksley now proceeded to the distribution of the spoil, which he performed with the most laudable impartiality. A tenth part of the whole was set apart for the church and for pious uses; a portion was next allotted to a sort of public treasury; a part was assigned to the widows and children of those who had fallen, or to be expended in masses for the souls of such as had left no surviving family. The rest was divided amongst the outlaws, according to their rank and merit; and the judgment of the chief, on all such doubtful questions as occurred, was delivered with great shrewdness, and received with absolute submission. The Black Knight was not a little surprised to find that men, in a state so lawless, were nevertheless among themselves so regularly and equitably governed, and all that he observed added to his opinion of the justice and judgment of their leader.

When each had taken his own proportion of the

booty, and while the treasurer, accompanied by four tall yeomen, was transporting that belonging to the state to some place of concealment or of security, the portion devoted to the church still remained unappropriated.

"I would," said the leader, "we could hear tidings of our joyous chaplain—he was never wont to be absent when meat was to be blessed or spoil to be parted; and it is his duty to take care of these the tithes of our successful enterprise. It may be the office has helped to cover some of his canonical irregularities. Also, I have a holy brother of his a prisoner at no great distance, and I would fain have the Friar to help me to deal with him in due sort. I greatly misdoubt the safety of the bluff priest."

"I were right sorry for that," said the Knight of the Fetterlock, "for I stand indebted to him for the joyous hospitality of a merry night in his cell. Let us to the ruins of the castle; it may be we shall there learn some tidings of him."

While they thus spoke, a loud shout among the yeomen announced the arrival of him for whom they feared, as they learned from the stentorian voice of the Friar himself, long before they saw his burly person.

"Make room, my merry men!" he exclaimed—"room for your godly father and his prisoner. Cry welcome once more. I come, noble leader, like an eagle with my prey in my clutch." And making his way through the ring, amidst the laughter of all around, he appeared in majestic triumph, his huge partisan in one hand, and in the other a halter, one end of which was fastened to the neck of the unfortunate Isaac of York, who, bent down by sorrow and terror, was dragged on by the victorious priest, who shouted aloud, "Where is Allan-a-Dale, to chronicle me in a ballad, or if it were but a lay? By Saint Hermangild, the jingling crowder is ever out of the way where there is an apt theme for exalting valour!"

" Curtal Priest," said the Captain, " thou hast been at a wet mass this morning, as early as it is. In the name of Saint Nicholas, whom hast thou got here ? "

" A captive to my sword and to my lance, noble Captain," replied the Clerk of Copmanhurst—" to my bow and to my halberd, I should rather say ; and yet I have redeemed him by my divinity from a worse captivity. Speak, Jew ; have I not ransomed thee from Sathanas ?—have I not taught thee thy *credo*, thy *pater*, and thine *Ave Maria ?* Did I not spend the whole night in drinking to thee, and in expounding of mysteries ? "

" Jew," said the Captain, " is this true ? hast thou renounced thine unbelief ? "

" May I so find mercy in your eyes," said the Jew, " as I know not one word which the reverend prelate spake to me all this fearful night. Alas ! I was so distraught with agony, and fear, and grief, that had our holy father Abraham come to preach to me, he had found but a deaf listener."

" Thou liest, Jew, and thou knowest thou dost," said the Friar ; " I will remind thee of but one word of our conference—thou didst promise to give all thy substance to our holy Order."

" So help me the Promise, fair sirs," said Isaac, even more alarmed than before, " as no such sounds ever crossed my lips ! Alas ! I am an aged beggared man—I fear me a childless. Have ruth on me, and let me go ! "

" Nay," said the Friar, " if thou dost retract vows made in favour of holy Church, thou must do penance."

Accordingly, he raised his halberd, and would have laid the staff of it lustily on the Jew's shoulders, had not the Black Knight stopped the blow, and thereby transferred the Holy Clerk's resentment to himself.

" By Saint Thomas of Kent," said he, " an I buckle to my gear, I will teach thee, sir lazy lover, to mell

with thine own matters, maugre thine iron case there!"

"Nay, be not wroth with me," said the Knight; "thou knowest I am thy sworn friend and comrade."

"I know no such thing," answered the Friar, "and defy thee for a meddling coxcomb!"

"Nay, but," said the Knight, who seemed to take a pleasure in provoking his quondam host, "hast thou forgotten how that, for my sake (for I say nothing of the temptation of the flagon and the pasty), thou didst break thy vow of fast and vigil?"

"Truly, friend," said the Friar, clenching his huge fist, "I will bestow a buffet on thee."

"I accept of no such presents," said the Knight; "I am content to take thy cuff as a loan, but I will repay thee with usury as deep as ever thy prisoner there exacted in his traffic."

"I will prove that presently," said the Friar.

"Hola!" cried the Captain, "what art thou after, mad Friar? brawling beneath our Trysting-tree?"

"No brawling," said the Knight; "it is but a friendly interchange of courtesy.—Friar, strike an thou darest; I will stand thy blow, if thou wilt stand mine."

"Thou hast the advantage with that iron pot on thy head," said the churchman; "but have at thee. Down thou goest, an thou wert Goliath of Gath in his brazen helmet."

The Friar bared his brawny arm up to the elbow, and putting his full strength to the blow, gave the Knight a buffet that might have felled an ox. But his adversary stood firm as a rock. A loud shout was uttered by all the yeomen around, for the Clerk's cuff was proverbial amongst them, and there were few who, in jest or earnest, had not had occasion to know its vigour.

"Now, Priest," said the Knight pulling off his gauntlet, "if I had vantage on my head, I will have none on my hand. Stand fast as a true man."

"*Genam meam dedi vapulatori*—I have given my cheek to the smiter," said the Priest; "an thou canst stir me from the spot, fellow, I will freely bestow on thee the Jew's ransom."

So spoke the burly Priest, assuming, on his part, high defiance. But who may resist his fate? The buffet of the Knight was given with such strength and good-will, that the Friar rolled head over heels upon the plain, to the great amazement of all the spectators. But he arose neither angry nor crestfallen.

"Brother," said he to the Knight, "thou shouldst have used thy strength with more discretion. I had mumbled but a lame mass an thou hadst broken my jaw, for the piper plays ill that wants the nether chops. Nevertheless, there is my hand, in friendly witness that I will exchange no more cuffs with thee, having been a loser by the barter. End now all unkindness. Let us put the Jew to ransom, since the leopard will not change his spots, and a Jew he will continue to be."

"The Priest," said Clement, "is not half so confident of the Jew's conversion since he received that buffet on the ear."

"Peace all!" said the Captain. "And thou, Jew, think of thy ransom, while I examine a prisoner of another cast."

[Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx was then brought in, and he and the Jew were sportively made to fix the amount of each other's ransoms and dismissed. The Black Knight then took leave of the Outlaw in turn, mounted upon his strong war-horse and rode off through the forest.

V

The morning after the fall of Torquilstone Castle the rumour of what had happened came to Prince John at York, and De Bracy soon arrived to confirm it. He told the Prince how he had seen and spoken with

King Richard ; and announced his intention of leaving at once for Flanders with his Free Lances. John then persuaded Fitzurse to take five of his men to waylay Richard, and kill him in case he resisted.

The same day Bois-Guilbert with Rebecca had reached the Preceptory of Templestowe, a house of the Order of the Knights Templars, where the Grand Master himself was then present, by name Lucas de Beaumanoir. To him came Isaac the Jew, with a petition for the release of his daughter. The Grand Master, alarmed at Bois-Guilbert's infatuation for Rebecca, suspected her of sorcery, and decided that she must be tried for the crime, the penalty for which was death by burning. Bois-Guilbert begged her to fly with him ; but she refused as before, and he could only advise her to exercise her right, as an accused woman, to demand a trial by combat, and appeal for a champion to fight for her. The champion would have to meet her unwilling accuser, Bois-Guilbert himself, who was desperate with conflicting emotions ; he was half resolved to go to the Grand Master, abjure the Order to his very teeth, and refuse to act the brutality which his tyranny had prescribed. But he was restrained by the thought that King Richard would be glad of his disgrace ; he determined to appear in the lists, and Rebecca was given three days to find a champion. All she could do was to send a letter to her father.]

In the meantime, the Black Champion and his guide (Wamba) were pacing at their leisure through the recesses of the forest—the good Knight whiles humming to himself the lay of some enamoured troubadour, sometimes encouraging by questions the prating disposition of his attendant, so that their dialogue formed a whimsical mixture of song and jest, of which we would fain give our readers some idea. You are, then, to imagine this Knight, such as we have already described him, strong of person, tall, broad-shouldered,

and large of bone, mounted on his mighty black charger, which seemed made on purpose to bear his weight, so easily he paced forward under it, having the visor of his helmet raised, in order to admit freedom of breath, yet keeping the beaver, or under part, closed, so that his features could be but imperfectly distinguished. But his ruddy embrowned cheek-bones could be plainly seen, and the large and bright blue eyes, that flashed from under the dark shade of the raised visor; and the whole gesture and look of the champion expressed careless gaiety and fearless confidence—a mind which was unapt to apprehend danger, and prompt to defy it when most imminent —yet with whom danger was a familiar thought, as with one whose trade was war and adventure.

The Jester wore his usual fantastic habit, but late accidents had led him to adopt a good cutting falchion instead of his wooden sword, with a targe to match it; of both which weapons he had, notwithstanding his profession, shown himself a skilful master during the storming of Torquilstone. Indeed, the infirmity of Wamba's brain consisted chiefly in a kind of impatient irritability, which suffered him not long to remain quiet in any posture, or adhere to any certain train of ideas, although he was for a few minutes alert enough in performing any immediate task, or in apprehending any immediate topic. On horseback, therefore, he was perpetually swinging himself backwards and forwards, now on the horse's ears, then anon on the very rump of the animal—now hanging both his legs on one side, and now sitting with his face to the tail, moping, mowing, and making a thousand apish gestures, until his palfrey took his freaks so much to heart as fairly to lay him at his length on the green grass—an incident which greatly amused the Knight, but compelled his companion to ride more steadily thereafter.

At the point of their journey at which we take them up, this joyous pair were engaged in singing a *virelai*,

as it was called, in which the clown bore a mellow burden to the better instructed Knight of the Fetterlock. And thus ran the ditty :—

"Anna-Marie, love, up is the sun,
Anna-Marie, love, morn is begun,
Mists are dispersing, love, birds singing free,
Up in the morning, love, Anna-Marie.
Anna-Marie, love, up in the morn,
The hunter is winding blithe sounds on his horn,
The echo rings merry from rock and from tree,
'Tis time to arouse thee, love, Anna-Marie."

WAMBA

"O Tybalt, love, Tybalt, awake me not yet,
Around my soft pillow while softer dreams flit ;
For what are the joys that in waking we prove,
Compared with these visions, O Tybalt, my love ?
Let the birds to the rise of the mist carol shrill,
Let the hunter blow out his loud horn on the hill,
Softer sounds, softer pleasures, in slumber I prove,—
But think not I dreamt of thee, Tybalt, my love."

"A dainty song," said Wamba, when they had finished their carol, "and I swear by my bauble, a pretty moral ! I used to sing it with Gurth, once my playfellow, and now, by the grace of God and his master, no less than a freeman ; and we once came by the cudgel for being so entranced by the melody that we lay in bed two hours after sunrise, singing the ditty betwixt sleeping and waking—my bones ache at thinking of the tune ever since. Nevertheless, I have played the part of Anna-Marie, to please you, fair sir."

The Jester next struck into another carol, a sort of comic ditty, to which the Knight, catching up the tune, replied in like manner.

KNIGHT AND WAMBA

"There came three merry men from south, west, and north,
Evermore sing the roundelay;
To win the Widow of Wycombe forth,
And where was the widow might say them nay?

The first was a knight, and from Tynedale he came,
Evermore sing the roundelay;
And his fathers, God save us, were men of great fame,
And where was the widow might say him nay?

Of his father the laird, of his uncle the squire,
He boasted in rhyme and in roundelay;
She bade him go bask by his sea-coal fire,
For she was the widow would say him nay.

WAMBA

The next that came forth swore by blood and by nails,
Merrily sing the roundelay;
Hur's a gentleman, God wot, and hur's lineage was of Wales,
And where was the widow might say him nay?

Sir David ap Morgan ap Griffith ap Hugh
Ap Tudor ap Rhice, quoth his roundelay;
She said that one widow for so many was too few,
And she bade the Welshman wend his way.

But then next came a yeoman, a yeoman of Kent,
Jollily singing his roundelay;
He spoke to the widow of living and rent,
And where was the widow could say him nay?

BOTH

So the knight and the squire were both left in the mire,
There for to sing their roundelay;
For a yeoman of Kent, with his yearly rent,
There never was a widow could say him nay."

"I would, Wamba," said the Knight, "that our host of the Trysting-tree, or the jolly Friar, his chaplain, heard this thy ditty in praise of our bluff yeoman."

"So would not I," said Wamba—"but for the horn that hangs at your baldric."

"Ay," said the Knight; "this is a pledge of Locksley's good-will, though I am not like to need it. Three mots on this bugle will, I am assured, bring round, at our need, a jolly band of yonder honest yeomen."

"Marry, sir, but we have Malvoisin's men-at-arms," said Wamba; "and let me tell you that, in time of civil war, a halfscore of these is worth a band of wolves at any time. They are now expecting their harvest, and are reinforced with the soldiers that escaped from Torquilstone. So that, should we meet with a band of them, we are like to pay for our feats of arms. Now, I pray you, Sir Knight, what would you do if we met two of them?"

"Pin the villains to the earth with my lance, Wamba, if they offered us any impediment."

"But what if there were four of them?"

"They should drink of the same cup," answered the Knight.

"What if six," continued Wamba, "and we as we now are, barely two—would you not remember Locksley's horn?"

"What! sound for aid," exclaimed the Knight, against a score of such *rascaille* as these, whom one good knight could drive before him, as the wind drives the withered leaves?"

"Nay, then," said Wamba, "I will pray you for a close sight of that same horn that hath so powerful a breath."

The Knight undid the clasp of the baldric, and indulged his fellow-traveller, who immediately hung the bugle round his own neck.

"Tra-lira-la," said he, whistling the notes; "nay, I know my gamut as well as another."

"How mean you, knave?" said the Knight; "restore me the bugle."

"Content you, Sir Knight, it is in safe keeping. When Valour and Folly travel, Folly should bear the horn, because she can blow the best."

"Nay but, rogue," said the Black Knight, "this exceedeth thy license. Beware ye tamper not with my patience."

"Urge me not with violence, Sir Knight," said the Jester, keeping at a distance from the impatient champion, "or Folly will show a clean pair of heels, and leave Valour to find out his way through the wood as best he may."

"Nay, thou hast hit me there," said the Knight; "and, sooth to say, I have little time to jangle with thee. Keep the horn an thou wilt, but let us proceed on our journey."

"You will not harm me, then?" said Wamba.

"I tell thee no, thou knave!"

"Ay, but pledge me your knightly word for it," continued Wamba, as he approached with great caution.

"My knightly word I pledge; only come on with thy foolish self."

"Nay, then, Valour and Folly are once more boon companions," said the Jester, coming up frankly to the Knight's side; "but, in truth, I love not such buffets as that you bestowed on the burly Friar, when his holiness rolled on the green like a king of the nine-pins. And now that Folly wears the horn, let Valour rouse himself and shake his mane; for, if I mistake not, there are company in yonder brake that are on the look-out for us."

"What makes thee judge so?" said the Knight.

"Because I have twice or thrice noticed the glance of a morion from amongst the green leaves. Had they

been honest men, they had kept the path. But yonder thicket is a choice chapel for the Clerks of Saint Nicholas."

"By my faith," said the Knight, closing his visor, "I think thou be'st in the right on't."

And in good time did he close it, for three arrows flew at the same instant from the suspected spot against his head and breast, one of which would have penetrated to the brain, had it not been turned aside by the steel visor. The other two were averted by the gorget and by the shield which hung around his neck.

"Thanks, trusty armourer," said the Knight.—"Wamba, let us close with them," and he rode straight to the thicket. He was met by six or seven men-at-arms, who ran against him with their lances at full career. Three of the weapons struck against him, and splintered with as little effect as if they had been driven against a tower of steel. The Black Knight's eyes seemed to flash fire even through the aperture of his visor. He raised himself in his stirrups with an air of inexpressible dignity, and exclaimed, "What means this, my masters?" The men made no other reply than by drawing their swords and attacking him on every side, crying, "Die, tyrant!"

"Ha! Saint Edward! Ha! Saint George!" said the Black Knight, striking down a man at every invocation; "have we traitors here?"

His opponents, desperate as they were, bore back from an arm which carried death in every blow, and it seemed as if the terror of his single strength was about to gain the battle against such odds, when a knight in blue armour, who had hitherto kept himself behind the other assailants, spurred forward with his lance, and taking aim, not at the rider but at the steed, wounded the noble animal mortally.

"That was a felon stroke!" exclaimed the Black

Knight, as the steed fell to the earth, bearing his rider along with him.

And at this moment Wamba winded the bugle, for the whole had passed so speedily, that he had not time to do so sooner. The sudden sound made the murderers bear back once more, and Wamba, though so imperfectly weaponed, did not hesitate to rush in and assist the Black Knight to rise.

"Shame on ye, false cowards!" exclaimed he in the blue harness, who seemed to lead the assailants, "do ye fly from the empty blast of a horn blown by a Jester?"

Animated by his words, they attacked the Black Knight anew, whose best refuge was now to place his back against an oak, and defend himself with his sword. The felon knight, who had taken another spear, watching the moment when his formidable antagonist was most closely pressed, galloped against him in hopes to nail him with his lance against the tree, when his purpose was again intercepted by Wamba. The Jester making up by agility the want of strength, and little noticed by the men-at-arms, who were busied in their more important object, hovered on the skirts of the fight, and effectually checked the fatal career of the Blue Knight, by hamstringing his horse with a stroke of his sword. Horse and man went to the ground. Yet the situation of the Knight of the Fetterlock continued very precarious, as he was pressed close by several men completely armed, and began to be fatigued by the violent exertions necessary to defend himself on so many points at nearly the same moment, when a grey-goose shaft suddenly stretched on the earth one of the most formidable of his assailants, and a band of yeomen broke forth from the glade, headed by Locksley and the jovial Friar, who, taking ready and effectual part in the fray, soon disposed of the ruffians, all of whom lay on the spot dead or mortally wounded. The

Black Knight thanked his deliverers with a dignity they had not observed in his former bearing, which hitherto had seemed rather that of a blunt bold soldier than of a person of exalted rank.

"It concerns me much," he said, "even before I express my full gratitude to my ready friends, to discover, if I may, who have been my unprovoked enemies.—Open the visor of that Blue Knight, Wamba, who seems the chief of these villains."

The Jester instantly made up to the leader of the assassins, who, bruised by his fall, and entangled under the wounded steed, lay incapable either of flight or resistance.

"Come, valiant sir," said Wamba, "I must be your armourer as well as your equerry—I have dismounted you, and now I will unhelm you."

So saying, with no very gentle hand he undid the helmet of the Blue Knight, which, rolling to a distance on the grass, displayed to the Knight of the Fetterlock grizzled locks, and a countenance he did not expect to have seen under such circumstances.

"Waldemar Fitzurse!" he said in astonishment; "what could urge one of thy rank and seeming worth to so foul an undertaking?"

"Richard," said the captive Knight, looking up to him, "thou knowest little of mankind, if thou knowest not to what ambition and revenge can lead every child of Adam."

"Revenge?" answered the Black Knight; "I never wronged thee. On me thou hast nought to revenge."

"My daughter, Richard, whose alliance thou didst scorn—was that no injury to a Norman, whose blood is noble as thine own?."

"Thy daughter?" replied the Black Knight; "a proper cause of enmity, and followed up to a bloody issue!—Stand back, my masters, I would speak to him alone.—And now, Waldemar Fitzurse, say me

the truth—confess who set thee on this traitorous deed."

"Thy father's son," answered Waldemar, "who, in so doing, did but avenge on thee thy disobedience to thy father."

Richard's eyes sparkled with indignation, but his better nature overcame it. He pressed his hand against his brow, and remained an instant gazing on the face of the humbled baron, in whose features pride was contending with shame.

"Thou dost not ask thy life, Waldemar," said the King.

"He that is in the lion's clutch," answered Fitzurse, "knows it were needless."

"Take it, then, unasked," said Richard; "the lion preys not on prostrate carcases. Take thy life, but with this condition, that in three days thou shalt leave England, and go to hide thine infamy in thy Norman castle; and that thou wilt never mention the name of John of Anjou as connected with thy felony. If thou art found on English ground after the space I have allotted thee, thou diest; or if thou breathest aught that can attaint the honour of my house, by Saint George! not the altar itself shall be a sanctuary. I will hang thee out to feed the ravens from the very pinnacle of thine own castle.—Let this knight have a steed, Locksley, for I see your yeomen have caught those which were running loose, and let him depart unharmed."

"But that I judge I listen to a voice whose behests must not be disputed," answered the yeoman, "I would send a shaft after the skulking villain, that should spare him the labour of a long journey."

"Thou bearest an English heart, Locksley," said the Black Knight, "and well dost judge thou art the more bound to obey my behest—I am Richard of England!"

At these words, pronounced in a tone of majesty

suited to the high rank and no less distinguished character of Cœur-de-Lion, the yeomen at once kneeled down before him, and at the same time tendered their allegiance, and implored pardon for their offences.

"Rise, my friends," said Richard, in a gracious tone, looking on them with a countenance in which his habitual good-humour had already conquered the blaze of hasty resentment, and whose features retained no mark of the late desperate conflict, excepting the flush arising from exertion,—"arise," he said, "my friends! Your misdemeanours, whether in forest or field, have been atoned by the loyal services you rendered my distressed subjects before the walls of Torquilstone, and the rescue you have this day afforded to your sovereign. Arise, my liegemen, and be good subjects in future.—And thou, brave Locksley——"

"Call me no longer Locksley, my Liege, but know me under the name which, I fear, fame hath blown too widely not to have reached even your royal ears—I am Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest."

"King of Outlaws, and Prince of good fellows!" said the King, "who hath not heard a name that has been borne as far as Palestine? But be assured, brave Outlaw, that no deed done in our absence, and in the turbulent times to which it hath given rise, shall be remembered to thy disadvantage."

"True says the proverb," said Wamba, interposing his word, but with some abatement of his usual petulance,—

"When the cat is away,
The mice will play."

"What, Wamba, art thou there?" said Richard. "I have been so long of hearing thy voice, I thought thou hadst taken flight."

"I take flight!" said Wamba; "when do you

ever find Folly separated from Valour? There lies the trophy of my sword, that good grey gelding, whom I heartily wish upon his legs again, conditioning his master lay there houghed in his place. It is true, I gave a little ground at first, for a motley jacket does not brook lance-heads, as a steel doublet will. But if I fought not at sword's point, you will grant me that I sounded the onset."

"And to good purpose, honest Wamba," replied the King. "Thy good service shall not be forgotten."

"*Confiteor! Confiteor!*" exclaimed, in a submissive tone, a voice near the King's side—"my Latin will carry me no farther—but I confess my deadly treason, and pray leave to have absolution before I am led to execution!"

Richard looked around, and beheld the jovial Friar on his knees, telling his rosary, while his quarter-staff, which had not been idle during the skirmish, lay on the grass beside him. His countenance was gathered so as he thought might best express the most profound contrition, his eyes being turned up, and the corners of his mouth drawn down, as Wamba expressed it, like the tassels at the mouth of a purse. Yet this demure affectation of extreme penitence was whimsically belied by a ludicrous meaning which lurked in his huge features, and seemed to pronounce his fear and repentance alike hypocritical.

"For what art thou cast down, mad Priest?" said Richard. "Art thou afraid thy diocesan should learn how truly thou dost serve Our Lady and Saint Dunstan? Tush, man! fear it not; Richard of England betrays no secrets that pass over the flagon."

"Nay, most gracious Sovereign," answered the Hermit (well known to the curious in penny-histories of Robin Hood by the name of Friar Tuck), "it is not the crosier I fear, but the sceptre. Alas! that my sacrilegious fist should ever have been applied to the ear of the Lord's anointed!"

"Ha! ha!" said Richard, "sits the wind there? In truth I had forgotten the buffet, though mine ear sung after it for a whole day. But if the cuff was fairly given, I will be judged by the good men around if it was not as well repaid; or, if thou thinkest I still owe thee aught, and will stand forth for another counterbuff——"

"By no means," replied Friar Tuck, "I had mine own returned, and with usury. May your Majesty ever pay your debts as fully!"

"If I could do so with cuffs," said the King, "my creditors should have little reason to complain of an empty exchequer."

At the same time, two additional personages appeared on the scene.

The newcomers were Wilfred of Ivanhoe, on the Prior of Botolph's palfrey, and Gurth, who attended him, on the Knight's own war-horse. The astonishment of Ivanhoe was beyond bounds when he saw his master besprinkled with blood, and six or seven dead bodies lying around in the little glade in which the battle had taken place. Nor was he less surprised to see Richard surrounded by so many silvan attendants, the outlaws, as they seemed to be, of the forest, and a perilous retinue therefore for a prince. He hesitated whether to address the King as the Black Knight-errant, or in what other manner to demean himself towards him. Richard saw his embarrassment.

"Fear not, Wilfred," he said, "to address Richard Plantagenet as himself, since thou seest him in the company of true English hearts, although it may be they have been urged a few steps aside by warm English blood."

"Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe," said the gallant Outlaw, stepping forward, "my assurances can add nothing to those of our sovereign; yet, let me say somewhat proudly, that of men who have suffered much, he

hath not truer subjects than those who now stand around him."

"I cannot doubt it, brave man," said Wilfred, "since thou art of the number. But what mean these marks of death and danger—these slain men, and the bloody armour of my Prince?"

"Treason hath been with us, Ivanhoe," said the King; "but, thanks to these brave men, treason hath met its meed. But, now I bethink me, thou too art a traitor," said Richard, smiling—"a most disobedient traitor; for were not our orders positive, that thou shouldst repose thyself at Saint Botolph's until thy wound was healed?"

"It is healed," said Ivanhoe; "it is not of more consequence than the scratch of a bodkin. But why, oh why, noble Prince, will you thus vex the hearts of your faithful servants, and expose your life by lonely journeys and rash adventures, as if it were of no more value than that of a mere knight-errant, who has no interest on earth but what lance and sword may procure him?"

"And Richard Plantagenet," said the King, "desires no more fame than his good lance and sword may acquire him; and Richard Plantagenet is prouder of achieving an adventure, with only his good sword and his good arm to speed, than if he led to battle an host of an hundred thousand armed men."

"But your kingdom, my Liege," said Ivanhoe, "your kingdom is threatened with dissolution and civil war—your subjects menaced with every species of evil, if deprived of their sovereign in some of those dangers which it is your daily pleasure to incur, and from which you have but this moment narrowly escaped."

"Ho! ho! my kingdom and my subjects?" answered Richard impatiently. "I tell thee, Sir Wilfred, the best of them are most willing to repay my follies in kind. For example, my very faithful

servant, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, will not obey my positive commands, and yet reads his king a homily, because he does not walk exactly by his advice. Which of us has most reason to upbraid the other? Yet forgive me, my faithful Wilfred. The time I have spent, and am yet to spend in concealment, is, as I explained to thee at Saint Botolph's, necessary to give my friends and faithful nobles time to assemble their forces, that when Richard's return is announced, he should be at the head of such a force as enemies shall tremble to face, and thus subdue the meditated treason without even unsheathing a sword. Estoteville and Bohun will not be strong enough to move forward to York for twenty-four hours. I must have news of Salisbury from the south; and of Beauchamp, in Warwickshire; and of Multon and Percy in the north. The Chancellor must make sure of London. Too sudden an appearance would subject me to dangers other than my lance and sword, though backed by the bow of bold Robin, or the quarter-staff of Friar Tuck, and the horn of the sage Wamba, may be able to rescue me from."

Wilfred bowed in submission, well knowing how vain it was to contend with the wild spirit of chivalry which so often impelled his master upon dangers which he might easily have avoided, or rather, which it was unpardonable in him to have sought out. The young knight sighed, therefore, and held his peace; while Richard, rejoiced at having silenced his counsellor, though his heart acknowledged the justice of the charge he had brought against him, went on in conversation with Robin Hood.—"King of Outlaws," he said, "have you no refreshment to offer to your brother sovereign? for these dead knaves have found me both in exercise and appetite."

"In troth," replied the Outlaw, "for I scorn to lie to your Grace, our larder is chiefly supplied with——" He stopped, and was somewhat embarrassed.

"With venison, I suppose?" said Richard gaily. "Better food at need there can be none; and truly, if a king will not remain at home and slay his own game, methinks he should not brawl too loud if he finds it killed to his hand."

"If your Grace, then," said Robin, "will again honour with your presence one of Robin Hood's places of rendezvous, the venison shall not be lacking; and a stoup of ale, and it may be a cup of reasonably good wine, to relish it withal."

The Outlaw accordingly led the way, followed by the buxom Monarch, more happy, probably, in this chance meeting with Robin Hood and his foresters, than he would have been in again assuming his royal state, and presiding over a splendid circle of peers and nobles. Novelty in society and adventure were the zest of life to Richard Cœur-de-Lion, and it had its highest relish when enhanced by dangers encountered and surmounted. In the lion-hearted King, the brilliant but useless character of a knight of romance was in a great measure realized and revived; and the personal glory which he acquired by his own deeds of arms was far more dear to his excited imagination than that which a course of policy and wisdom would have spread around his government. Accordingly, his reign was like the course of a brilliant and rapid meteor, which shoots along the face of heaven, shedding around an unnecessary and portentous light, which is instantly swallowed up by universal darkness; his feats of chivalry furnishing themes for bards and minstrels, but affording none of those solid benefits to his country on which history loves to pause, and hold up as an example to posterity. But in his present company Richard showed to the greatest imaginable advantage. He was gay, good-humoured, and fond of manhood in every rank of life.

Beneath a huge oak-tree the silvan repast was

hastily prepared for the King of England, surrounded by men, outlaws to his government, but who now formed his court and his guard. As the flagon went round, the rough foresters soon lost their awe for the presence of Majesty. The song and the jest were exchanged; the stories of former deeds were told with advantage; and at length, and while boasting of their successful infraction of the laws, no one recollected they were speaking in presence of their natural guardian. The merry King, nothing heeding his dignity any more than his company, laughed, quaffed, and jested among the jolly band. The natural and rough sense of Robin Hood led him to be desirous that the scene should be closed ere anything should occur to disturb its harmony, the more especially that he observed Ivanhoe's brow clouded with anxiety. "We are honoured," he said to Ivanhoe, apart, "by the presence of our gallant Sovereign; yet I would not that he dallied with time, which the circumstances of his kingdom may render precious."

"It is well and wisely spoken, brave Robin Hood," said Wilfred, apart. "And know, moreover, that they who jest with Majesty even in its gayest mood, are but toying with the lion's whelp, which, on slight provocation, uses both fangs and claws."

"You have touched the very cause of my fear," said the Outlaw. "My men are rough by practice and nature; the King is hasty as well as good-humoured; nor know I how soon cause of offence may arise, or how warmly it may be received. It is time this revel were broken off."

"It must be by your management then, gallant yeoman," said Ivanhoe; "for each hint I have essayed to give him serves only to induce him to prolong it."

"Must I so soon risk the pardon and favour of my Sovereign?" said Robin Hood, pausing for an instant; "but by Saint Christopher it shall be so.

I were undeserving his grace did I not peril it for his good.—Here, Scathlock, get thee behind yonder thicket, and wind me a Norman blast on thy bugle, and without an instant's delay on peril of your life."

Scathlock obeyed his captain, and in less than five minutes the revellers were startled by the sound of his horn.

"It is the bugle of Malvoisin," said the Miller, starting to his feet, and seizing his bow. The Friar dropped the flagon, and grasped his quarter-staff. Wamba stopped short in the midst of a jest, and betook himself to sword and target. All the others stood to their weapons.

Men of their precarious course of life change readily from the banquet to the battle, and, to Richard, the exchange seemed but a succession of pleasure. He called for his helmet and the most cumbrous parts of his armour, which he had laid aside ; and while Gurth was putting them on, he laid his strict injunctions on Wilfred, under pain of his highest displeasure, not to engage in the skirmish which he supposed was approaching.

"Thou hast fought for me an hundred times, Wilfred, and I have seen it. Thou shalt this day look on, and see how Richard will fight for his friend and liegeman."

In the meantime, Robin Hood had sent off several of his followers in different directions, as if to reconnoitre the enemy ; and when he saw the company effectually broken up, he approached Richard, who was now completely armed, and, kneeling down on one knee, craved pardon of his sovereign.

"For what, good yeoman ?" said Richard, somewhat impatiently. "Have we not already granted thee a full pardon for all transgressions ? Thinkest thou our word is a feather to be blown backward and forward between us ? Thou canst not have had time to commit any new offence since that time ?"

"Ay, but I have, though," answered the yeoman, "if it be an offence to deceive my Prince for his own advantage. The bugle you have heard was none of Malvoisin's, but blown by my direction, to break off the banquet, lest it trenched upon hours of dearer import than to be thus dallied with."

He then rose from his knee, folded his arm on his bosom, and in a manner rather respectful than submissive awaited the answer of the King—like one who is conscious he may have given offence, yet is confident in the rectitude of his motive. The blood rushed in anger to the countenance of Richard; but it was the first transient emotion, and his sense of justice instantly subdued it.

"The King of Sherwood," he said, "grudges his venison and his wine-flask to the King of England? It is well, bold Robin; but when you come to see me in merry London, I trust to be a less niggard host. Thou art right, however, good fellow. Let us therefore to horse and away; Wilfred has been impatient this hour. Tell me, bold Robin, hast thou never a friend in thy band who, not content with advising, will needs direct thy motions, and look miserable when thou dost presume to act for thyself?"

"Such a one," said Robin, "is my Lieutenant, Little John, who is even now absent on an expedition as far as the borders of Scotland. And I will own to your Majesty that I am sometimes displeased by the freedom of his counsels; but when I think twice, I cannot be long angry with one who can have no motive for his anxiety save zeal for his master's service."

"Thou art right, good yeoman," answered Richard; "and if I had Ivanhoe, on the one hand, to give grave advice, and recommend it by the sad gravity of his brow, and thee, on the other, to trick me into what thou thinkest my own good, I should have as little

the freedom of mine own will as any king in Christendom or Heathenesse.—But come, sirs, let us merrily on to Coningsburgh, and think no more on't."

Robin Hood assured them that he had detached a party in the direction of the road they were to pass, who would not fail to discover and apprise them of any secret ambuscade ; and that he had little doubt they would find the ways secure, or, if otherwise, would receive such timely notice of the danger as would enable them to fall back on a strong troop of archers, with which he himself proposed to follow on the same route.

The wise and attentive precautions adopted for his safety touched Richard's feelings, and removed any slight grudge which he might retain on account of the deception the outlaw Captain had practised upon him. He once more extended his hand to Robin Hood, assured him of his full pardon and future favour, as well as his firm resolution to restrain the tyrannical exercise of the forest rights and other oppressive laws, by which so many English yeomen were driven into a state of rebellion. But Richard's good intentions towards the bold Outlaw were frustrated by the King's untimely death, and the Charter of the Forest was extorted from the unwilling hands of King John when he succeeded to his heroic brother. As for the rest of Robin Hood's career, as well as the tale of his treacherous death, they are to be found in those black-letter garlands, once sold at the low and easy rate of one halfpenny,

" Now cheaply purchased at their weight in gold."

VI

[King Richard without further interruption, arrived with Ivanhoe, Gurth, and Wamba at the castle of Coningsburgh, where the funeral of Athelstane was

to take place. In the King's presence Cedric now forgave his son Wilfred, but insisted on his waiting two years before wedding Rowena, who had been promised to the dead Athelstane. At this moment Athelstane himself appeared, like a spectre ; he had been in a trance and had suddenly recovered to find himself laid out for burial and very hungry. He insisted on resigning his pretensions to the throne, in favour of Richard, and he was also renouncing Rowena's hand to Ivanhoe, when it was discovered that Ivanhoe had been urgently summoned by a Jew and had left the castle in haste. He was in fact riding for Templestowe, where the Templars had arranged the lists with a throne for the Grand Master and a stake and pile of faggots for Rebecca, who had only till midday given her for the arrival of her champion. After two hours' anxiety a knight was seen advancing towards the lists on a tired horse. He gave his name as Wilfred of Ivanhoe, and insisted on fighting in spite of his fatigue and recent wound. The two champions were placed by the heralds, the Grand Master threw Rebecca's glove, the gage of battle, into the lists and gave the fatal signal, "*Laissez aller.*" The trumpets sounded and the knights charged. The wearied horse of Ivanhoe and its no less exhausted rider went down, as all expected, before the well-aimed lance and vigorous steed of the Templar ; but Bois-Guilbert himself, to the astonishment of all, reeled in his saddle, lost his stirrups, and fell dead. Unscathed by the lance of his enemy, he had died a victim to the violence of his own contending passions.

"This is indeed the judgment of God," said the Grand Master, looking upwards—"*Fiat voluntas tua !*"

He was interrupted by a clattering of horses' feet, advancing in such numbers, and so rapidly, as to shake the ground before them ; and the Black

Knight galloped into the lists, followed by a numerous band of men-at-arms and several knights in complete armour. He ordered the Lord High Constable to arrest two of those who had conspired against him, and commanded the Grand Master to dissolve the Chapter of his Order and depart. Lucas de Beaumanoir and his Templars marched off with formidable discipline; and Richard rode slowly along their line, admiring their order, but openly challenging them to break a lance with him. They refused and went to lay their case before the Pope. De Bracy escaped beyond seas; Rebecca and her father also left England, after taking farewell of Rowena, who had been married two days before in York Minster to Wilfred of Ivanhoe.]

IV. THE OLD ENGLISH GREENWOOD.

Every writer, whether he cares to admit it or not, does in fact owe much of his material, and of the mental formation which governs his expression, to the thought and feeling of his own nation, past and present. It has even proved possible for a body of literature, expressing a very distinctive view of life, to spring up and last for many generations, without a trace of any individual personality, but strongly marked by the character of a race. For each of our old Ballads there was beyond doubt a single author, or a succession of single authors, at work ; but they were so completely identified with the community that the remembrance of their very names has perished. Each of them must have had a self, and that self he expressed ; but in so doing he expressed a greater self, a national self, from which he drew his peculiar power and for which he spoke so well that he perpetuated what he had received.

There is no more striking example of this than the ballad story of Robin Hood : a legend which was from the beginning handed down without any sign of authorship. We will steer upstream presently and explore its origins and early history ; but first let me remind you of its unique charm, and the perfection with which it expressed, or accorded with, certain marked characteristics of the people among whom it was so long a national possession.

" In somer, when the shawes be sheyne
And leves be large and long,
Hit is full mery in fayre foreste
To here the foulys song :

"To se the dere draw to the dale
And leve the hillës hee,
And shadow hem in the levës grene
Under the greenwode tree."

To this day, in a combe of the Quantocks or of Exmoor, or in a glade of that forest where the kings of England have been at home for some nine hundred years, you may lie beneath the bracken at noon and see the deer draw to the dale and shadow them under the greenwood tree. And, if you are one who knows the best and discounts the worst of your fellow-countrymen, you will hear out of old memory the story of—

"Robin that was a proud outlaw
The while he walked on ground;
So courteous an outlaw as he was one
Was never none y-found."

And then his courteous greenwood law:—

"Thereof no force, then said Robin:
We shall do well enow;
But look ye do no husband harm
That tilleth with his plow.

No more ye shall no good yeoman
That walketh by greenwood shaw:
Nor yet no knight nor no squier
That will be a good fellow."

Nor should any company be harmed wherein there was a woman; only "these bishops and these archbishops," and such oppressors as the Sheriff of Nottingham, were to be appropriately kept in mind. The tale is a long and excellent one, true in every note, but truest at the end. When Robin has been pardoned by King Edward, and taken away to Court,

he pines for his old life in Barnsdale, and gets leave to go—

> " When he came to greenë-wood
> In a merry morning,
> There he heard the notës small
> Of birds merry singing.
>
> It is far gone, said Robin Hood,
> That I was latest here ;
> Me list a little for to shoot
> At the dunnë deer."

We can judge this idealized forest life, rough and generous, honourable and unscrupulous, English and poetical, by a better test than our own feeling : it is mirrored with all its long descended beauty in the deep woodland pool of Shakespeare's mind. When Oliver, in *As You Like It*, asks, " Where will the old Duke live ? " Charles, from whom no one could have expected sentiment of his own, replies, " They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him ; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England : they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world."

Then, as we wander on deeper and deeper into that intricate and enchanting wood, we hear Amiens singing, " Under the Greenwood Tree," and the echo of it not long afterwards sung by the unknown author of *Pammelia*. After a long and troubled interval comes Scott, with his irresistible chorus of *Brignall Banks* ; and we perceive that, for all the great Romantic could do, the life of the outlaw in the greenwood has become a memory of the past. Keats knows this and openly laments it ; his *Robin Hood* is the dirge of a national legend. In the last hundred years only one poet has succeeded in dreaming it to life again : where Tennyson utterly failed Alfred Noyes has succeeded,

and happily with verse worthy to close so stormy a cycle:—

"Sherwood in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake;
Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again, all his merry thieves
Hear a ghostly bugle-note, shivering through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.
. . . . . .
Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together,
With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose feather;
The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day."

Let us turn now for our upstream voyage. Scott and Peacock, as we have seen, drew from the same sources, and we happen to know exactly where those were. First there was Ritson's volume of 1795, containing the ballads, with notes and additions; secondly, there was in each case some edition of the seventeenth-century collection known as *Robin Hood's Garland;* and thirdly, there were the two plays published in 1601 by Antony Munday (assisted by Henry Chettle), the *Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon,* and the *Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon.* Of these plays Scott may have read the whole text; but it seems probable that Peacock only knew so much as is quoted in Ritson's book. In any case, these ballads and plays are the undoubted common ancestors of *Maid Marian* and *Ivanhoe.* From Munday came the King Richard and Prince John of both books, and the Matilda Fitzwater, or Maid Marian, of

Peacock's. It is easy to see how the two writers came to pick their material as they did. Richard was a famous heroic figure, suitable to both, and especially necessary to Scott, who had taken from Logan's *Runnamede* the suggestion of a contrast between the Saxons of the twelfth century, by whom the soil of England was still cultivated, and the Normans, who still reigned over it as conquerors. John was an excellent villain, ready made for the purposes of both authors; and Matilda–Marian, though useless to Scott, was the be-all and end-all of Peacock's story.

But when we go farther back and ask where Munday's plot came from, and what traditions or documents provided him with these twelfth-century characters, we find ourselves in a new region altogether—a region at once more traditional and more historical. Munday and his like had abandoned both tradition and history, and had created, out of the exuberance of their own taste, a greenwood of their own, with king and peers of their own to match. When we reach the year 1500, and look back farther and farther through the two preceding centuries, we see no noble lords and ladies. Robin is not Robert Fitzooth, nor Earl of Huntingdon, but a good yeoman of free blood; Marian is not a great lord's daughter, and her story would appear to be a different one from Robin's. When she first appears—in Barclay's *Fourth Eclogue*—one shepherd says to another:

> 'Yet would I gladly have some mery fit
> Of Maide Marian or els of Robin Hood.''

The rest are mere shadows or illusions: in King Richard's days there was not in England a peerage of Fitzwater, or even such a surname; and a Fitzooth there never was at all.

Before the year 1500 the story or legend of Robin Hood was a clear and simple one, with every appear-

ance of being at any rate founded on historical fact. There is a King of England in it, but his name is not Richard ; it is Edward, and, as it could not possibly be an Edward so late as Edward III., it would be natural to suppose that the popular and long-lived king, at whose court Robin Hood was said to have lived for twenty-two years, must have been Edward I. This supposition is supported by a certain amount of evidence. Bower, writing in 1441–47 of the popularity of the Robin Hood Ballads, says that Robin had been a follower of Simon, Earl of Montfort. Montfort, as history records, was killed at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, and was held by the people of England to have died for their liberties. The remnant of his followers in the Midlands would be, naturally, popular heroes, though broken and outlawed men. Again, a little farther back (about 1420), Wynton's Chronicle contains this passage on the year 1283 (12, Edward I.) :—

> " Lytill John and Robin Hude
> Waythmen were commendyd gude :
> In Yngilwode and Barnysdale
> Thai oisyd all this tyme thare travale."

Thirdly, we have a note which bears on this in Child's great book on the Ballads : " Joseph Hunter (*Critical and Historical Notes*, 4) says that Barnsdale was peculiarly unsafe for travellers in Edward I.'s time. Three ecclesiastics, conveyed from Scotland to Winchester, had a guard sometimes of eight archers, sometimes of twelve, or, farther south, of none at all ; but, when they passed from Pontefract to Tickhill, their number was increased to twenty '*propter Barnsdale*'—'*because of Barnsdale.*' "

But we have even better evidence than this to support the Edwardian date of Robin Hood's his-

Waythmen, Hunters. *Oisyd*, Used.

torical existence. *The Lytell Geste of Robin Hood and his Menie,* the longest English ballad we possess, is a witness second to none for its explicit and coherent account of Robin Hood, his followers, and their adventures, and it is older by a century than all the plays and other ballads which touch this point. It appears in its present form to belong to the end of the fifteenth century, but to have been compiled from an earlier set of fourteenth-century ballads. The story thus told is nowhere in conflict with known historical facts, as are all the sources of the Richard I. legend. If, then, we are to find a historical origin for Robin Hood, we can have no hesitation in accepting the earliest and best account of him, instead of the tissue of inventions and absurdities offered us by Munday and his followers of the Ricardian tradition. These last, in fact, hardly ask us to believe their story, for they give us in Richard a king of England who was never in Barnsdale, nor long enough in England, between his accession and death, to keep Robin Hood at his court for the period mentioned in their own accounts.

The Lytell Geste is in excellent ballad verse, but it is not very easy to read, and it is immensely long. In order to make it available for comparison with the work of Peacock and Scott, it is better to present it in prose. The version which follows is a translation of the whole ballad into an English which is very little modernized from the original. A sentence or two has been added at the beginning to incorporate the historical evidence above mentioned, and the episode of the death of Robin Hood at the end has been added from another early ballad of equally good quality.

V. THE STORY OF THE OLD ROBIN HOOD OF ENGLAND.

I. THE GREENWOOD LAWS

To all gentlemen that are of free-born blood I tell this tale: namely of Robin Hood, which Robin was born at Loxley, a good yeoman of England, but by reason of many wrongs and oppressions was at the Battle of Evesham found in arms against King Henry the Third; and being outlawed therefor he kept first the forest of Pyperode in Feckenham and afterwards the forest of Sherwood in Nottinghamshire and the forest of Barnesdale in Yorkshire; wherein he lived with his men a merry life in the greenwood, in despite of the said King and of Prince Edward his son, taking for his victual the King's deer and for his purse the moneys of the proud, and succouring therewith the poor true men; for while he walked on ground he was ever a gentle outlaw and a courteous. Hearken then how Robin stood on a day in Barnesdale, leaning against a tree, and by him stood three of his men, Little John and Scathelock and Much the miller's son, and it drew toward dinner-time. Then said Little John, "Master, since we must spread our board, tell us where to go and how to deal; what to take and what to leave, whom to rob and whom to beat and whom to let be." Now Robin loved our dear Lady above all; therefore he said, "Look ye first that ye do no harm to any company where there is a woman therein; and after that look ye do no man harm that tilleth with plough; no more shall ye harm no good

yeoman, nor knight nor squire that will be a good fellow. But ye shall beat and bind these bishops and archbishops and the like, and especially forget not the High Sheriff of Nottingham. And until I have taken some proud baron that may pay for the best, I care not to dine."

"This word shall be kept," said Little John, "but the day grows late; God send us a guest soon, that we may dine." "Take your good bow then," said Robin Hood, "and Much and Scathelock with you, and go up to Watling Street and look for any guest that may chance that way—be he baron, abbot or knight, bring him here and he shall dine with me."

Then they went up to Watling Street all three, and saw no man; but, as they looked, a knight came riding by a narrow lane. He was no proud one, but dreary to look upon; he had but one foot in stirrup, his hood hung over his eyes, his array was poor—no sorrier man ever rode on a summer's day. Little John met him full courteously, "Welcome, gentle knight, welcome to greenwood; my master has been awaiting you fasting these three hours." "Who is your master?" said the knight. Little John said, "Robin Hood." "He is a good yeoman," said the knight, "I have heard much good of him. I will come with you, though my purpose was to have dined to-day elsewhere." And as they went the gentle knight was full of care, and tears fell from his eyes.

So they brought him to the door of their lodge. "Welcome, Sir Knight," said Robin, and he doffed his hood courteously. "Welcome, for I have awaited you fasting, these three hours." Then said the knight, "God save you, good Robin, and all your fair fellowship!" and they washed together and wiped, and set to their dinner. Bread and wine they had, and deer's tripe, and swans and pheasants and wild fowl. "Eat heartily, Sir Knight," said Robin. "I thank you, sir," said he, "I have not had such a dinner these

three weeks ; if I come again this way, Robin, I will make you as good a dinner as you have made me." " I thank you," said Robin, " I was never so hungry yet as to beg my dinner of another man. But tell me—before you go—was it ever the manner that a yeoman should pay for a knight ? "

" It shames me," said the knight, " but I have naught in my coffers that I can pay." " Tell me truth," said Robin, " so help you God." " So help me God, I have but ten shillings." " If you have no more," said Robin, " I will not take a penny of you ; nay, if you need more, more I will lend you." Then he said to Little John, " Go look now, Little John, and tell me the truth ; if there be no more than ten shillings, I will take not a penny."

Little John spread out his mantle on the ground and turned over the knight's coffer ; there he found but ten shillings. He let it lie, and came to his master. " What tidings, Little John ? " " Sir, the knight is true enough." " Then fill of the best wine," said Robin, " the knight shall begin." And to the knight he said, " Tell me one word and I will keep your counsel. I guess you were made a knight by force, or else you were yeoman born, or perchance you have been thriftless or quarrelsome or an evil liver, wasting your substance." " I am none of those," said the knight, " by Him that made me ; my ancestors have been knights this hundred years. It happens often, Robin, that a man may be unlucky ; but God may amend all. Within two years past, as all my neighbours well know, I had the spending of full four hundred pound of good money. Now, as God will have it, I have nothing left but my wife and my children."

" In what manner," then said Robin, " have you lost your wealth ? " " By my great folly," he said, " and my kindness. I had a son, Robin, that should have been my heir ; he was twenty years of age and a

fair jouster in field. But he slew a knight of Lancashire, and a squire too; and to save him from forfeiture all that I had must be set and sold. My lands are given in pledge until a certain day, to a rich abbot hereby of St. Mary's Abbey."

"What is the sum?" said Robin Hood, "tell me the truth of it." "Sir," he said, "it is four hundred pound; the Abbot lent it me." "If you lose your land," said Robin Hood, "what will become of you?" "I must make ready and get me gone over the salt sea, to the land where Christ lived and died on Mount Calvary. There is no help for it; farewell, my friend, and good luck to you." With that tears fell from his eyes, and he would have gone his way. "Farewell, friends," he said, "and good luck to you; I am sorry that I have no more to give you."

"Where are your friends?" said Robin Hood. "Sir, no one will know me now. When I was rich enough at home they made great boast of their friendship; now they run away from me, and take no more heed of me than if they had never seen me." Then Little John, Much, and Scathelock all fell to weeping for pity; but Robin said, "Fill of the best wine, for here is no hard matter. Have you no friends that will be your sureties?" Then said the knight, "I have none, but Him that died on tree." "Jest not," said Robin, "for I will have none of it. Think you I would take God to surety, or Peter or Paul, or John? Nay, find me some other surety, or you get no money of me."

"I have none other," said the knight, "unless it be our dear Lady; and till this day she has never failed me." Then said Robin, "Dear God, though I searched England through, I could never find a better surety for my money. Come now, Little John, go to my treasury and bring me four hundred pound, and see that it is well told." So Little John went with Scathelock, and told out eight and twenty score for

four hundred pound. "Call you that well told?" said Much. But Little John answered him, "What is troubling you? This is alms to help a gentle knight that is fallen in poverty." Then he said to Robin, "Master, his clothing is full thin. You must give the knight a livery, for you have scarlet cloth and green in plenty; there is no merchant so rich in merry England, I dare swear."

Then said Robin, "Take him three yards of each colour, and see that it is good measure." And Little John took his bow for measure, and at every handful that he took he leaped over three feet. "What devilkin's draper do you think you are?" said Much; but Scathelock laughed and said, "He measures right. He may well give good measure, for it cost him little enough."

"Master," then said Little John, "you must give the knight a horse, to lead home all this." "Give him a grey courser," said Robin, "and a new saddle; he is Our Lady's messenger." "Give him a good palfrey too," said Much. "And a pair of boots," said Scathelock. "What will you give him, Little John?" "Sir, a pair of gilt spurs; and God bring him out of sorrow." Then said the knight, "Sir, when shall my day be?" "This day twelvemonth," said Robin, "under this greenwood tree; and since it were great shame that a knight should ride alone without squire or yeoman or page, I shall lend you Little John, my man; if you should have great need, he may stand you in yeoman's stead."

II. ABBOTS AND THE LIKE

The knight went on his way. "This is a good game," he said to himself, and when he looked back on Barnesdale and thought of Robin Hood and Scathelock,

My day, The day for paying my debt.

Much and Little John, he blessed them for the best company he was ever in. Then he said to Little John, "To-morrow I must go to York, to St. Mary's Abbey, and pay the Abbot his four hundred pound; if I am not there by to-night my land is lost for good."

Next morning the Abbot said to his convent: "This day, twelve months ago, a knight came and borrowed four hundred pound of us; unless he comes with it this very day he will forfeit his heritage." But the Prior said: "It is full early; the day is not yet far gone. I had rather pay a hundred pound than see this done. Maybe the knight is far beyond sea, suffering hunger and cold and sorry nights; but his right is his in England, and it were great pity so to take his land. If you are so light of conscience, you will do him great wrong." "By God and St. Richard!" said the Abbot, "you are always plucking my beard!" and with that broke in a fat-headed monk that was High Cellarer. "The knight," he said, "is dead or hanged, be sure of it; and we shall have the spending of his four hundred pound a year."

Then the Abbot and the Cellarer started forth into the city, to the High Justice, and bought him over to help them; and the High Justice and others took in hand all the matter of the knight's debt, to the intent to do him shame and wrong. The Abbot and his crew were right hard upon the knight. "If he come not this very day," they said, "he shall lose his heritage." "He will not come now," said the Justice, "I dare well answer for that." But before the day was out, the knight came, in a sorry hour for them all.

Now, as they came, the knight and Little John had put off their good clothing and put on old things such as men wear who have come from sea. And when they had so changed their dress they came to the gates of the Abbey, and the great porter was there himself, and he knew the knight when he saw him. "Welcome, Sir Knight," he said, "my Lord Abbot

is at meat," and then he grinned and said, " He has a many gentle men to dinner to-day, all in honour of you." But when he saw the knight's horses he was astonished and swore a great oath. " By God, here be the best conditioned horses that ever I saw. Take them into the stable," he said, " to rest and feed." But the knight said, " Nay ! they shall come into no stable of yours."

In the Abbot's hall the great lords were sitting at meat ; the knight came in and saluted them all. Then he knelt humbly before the Abbot and said, " Sir Abbot, I am come to keep my day." The Abbot had no courtesy for him ; the first word that he spoke was, " Have you brought me my money ? " " Alack is me ! " said the knight, " not one penny of it." " You are a cursèd sort of debtor," said the Abbot. " Sir Justice, drink to me ! " Then he said again to the knight, " What are you doing here, if you have not brought your money ? " " I came," said the knight, " to pray you for a longer day." " Nay ! " said the Justice, " you have broken your day, you get no land now." " Good Sir Justice," said the knight, " be my friend, and help me against my enemies." " I am bound to my Lord Abbot," said the Justice, " both by reason of his cloth and of his fee." The knight turned him to the Sheriff, " Now, good Sir Sheriff, be my friend," he said. " Not I," said the Sheriff. Then the knight knelt again to the Abbot and prayed him : " Of your courtesy, good Sir Abbot, be my friend, and keep my lands in your hand until I have made satisfaction for my debt ; and I will be your servant and serve you truly till you have four hundred pounds of me, good money." But the Abbot swore a great oath, " Get your lands where you may ; you will get none of me."

Then the knight stood up. " Sir Abbot ! " he said, " if I get not my land again, it shall be bought full dearly ! God help you ! you thought me penniless ;

but what if I were but minded to try a friend, before I had need of him ? " Thereat the Abbot began to doubt, and cried out villainously against him. "Out!" he said, " you false knight, get you gone quickly from my hall ! " " You lie, Abbot, in your hall," said the gentle knight. " By God that made us both, I was never a false knight. I have been many a time in jousts and tournaments, and gone as far forward in fight as any that ever I saw. You have no courtesy, to let a knight kneel to you so long ! "

Now the Justice saw how the matter was turning, and he said to the Abbot, " How much more will you give the knight, to make you a release ? For else, I tell you surely, you will never hold your land in quiet possession." " A hundred pound," said the Abbot. The Justice said, " Give him two." " Nay," said the knight, " you get not my land so ; though you should offer a thousand pound more, you would be none the nearer. No Abbot, Justice, or friar shall ever be my heir ! "

With that he strode to a table and shook out of a bag four hundred pound, even money. " Take here your gold, Sir Abbot, that you lent me ; if you had been courteous when I came here, I would have made it worth your while."

The Abbot sat still. He had had enough of his royal dinner ; his eyes were fixed and his head drooped on his breast. " Sir Justice," he said, " give me my gold again that I gave you for your fee." But the Justice said, " Not I, by God, not a penny ! " Then the knight said, " Sir Abbot, and you men of law, I have kept my day ; now, for all that you can say I shall have my land again." And out of the door he went, free of all his care.

Then he put on his good clothing again, and went home singing merrily. At his own gate, in Uttersdale, his lady met him. " Welcome, my lord," she said. " Is all your land lost ? " " Be merry, dame,"

said the knight, " and bless Robin Hood ; but for his kindness, we had been beggars by now. The Abbot and I are quits—he has his money—the good yeoman lent it me, as I came by the way."

The knight then lived at home till he had got together four hundred pound ; also he bought a hundred bows, and a hundred sheaf of arrows with peacock feathers ; and purveyed him a hundred men, all in his livery of white and red, and he took lance in hand and rode away merrily into Barnesdale, to pay his debt to Robin Hood.

Now, as he went, he came to a bridge, where were men wrestling a match, all the best yeomen of the West Country. And it was a full fair game with great prizes—a white bull, a horse saddled and bridled, a pair of gloves, a ring of red gold, and a pipe of wine. And there was a yeoman there that was the best ; but since he was far from home, and a stranger, he was like to have been slain. The knight had pity of him, and swore that for love of Robin Hood he would see that the yeoman should have no harm. He pressed into the place, and his hundred men followed him, with bows bent and arrows on string, to shame that company ; and the countrymen made room for him, to hear what he would say. Then he took the yeoman by the hand and gave him fair play for his game ; and when he had won he gave him five marks for his wine, and bade them broach it there where it stood, that all might drink.

And while the gentle knight thus tarried till the wrestling was over, so long in the greenwood Robin waited fasting, three hours past noon.

III. THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM

Now turn we back a little, to hear good mirth of Little John, that had been the knight's man this year

past. Upon a feast day, when the young men had made a match to shoot, Little John fetched his bow and said that he would meet them. And so he did, and he shot three times, and every time he cleft the wand. Now the proud Sheriff of Nottingham came up and stood by the marks, and he swore a full great oath. "This man is the best archer that ever I saw yet." Then he said to Little John, "Tell me now, my brave young man, what is your name, where were you born, and where do you live?"

"I am my mother's own son," said Little John, "and I was born in Holderness; when I am at home men call me Reynold Greenleaf." Then said the Sheriff: "Reynold Greenleaf, will you take service with me? and I will give you for your wages twenty mark by the year." "I have a master already," said Little John, "he is a courteous knight, and it were better if you could get leave of him." So the Sheriff got Little John of the knight for twelve months, and gave him a good strong horse.

Now was Little John with the Sheriff, who thought he would serve him well; but Little John thought otherwise. "By my loyalty," said he, "I shall be the worst servant to him that he ever had yet." Then it befell on a day when the Sheriff was gone hunting, that Little John lay in bed at home forgotten. And when it was noon and he was still fasting, he said to the steward, "I pray you, good Sir Steward, give me to dine, for I am too long fasting." "Till my lord come home," said the steward, "you will get nothing to eat or drink." "I vow," said Little John, "I would sooner crack your crown than wait so long." The butler also was uncourteous in like manner; he went to the buttery and shut the door fast. But Little John gave him such a rap that he nearly broke his back—he would go the worse for that rap though he lived a hundred years after it. Then Little John burst the door with his foot; it went up well and

fine, and he gave out good commons of wine and ale. "Since you will not give me to dine," he said, "I will give you to drink; and you shall remember me, though you live a hundred year." So he ate and drank as he would.

Now the Sheriff had in his kitchen a cook, a stout man and bold. "I vow," said this cook, "you are a shrewd servant to live in a household, and come and ask to dine in this fashion." And he lent Little John three good blows. "I vow," said Little John, "I like these blows; you are a good man and a hardy, and I will make better trial of you before I leave." Then he drew his sword, and the cook took another in his hand. They had no thought of giving way, but stood stiffly up one to the other, and there they fought hard together the best part of an hour without either taking any harm. "I vow," said Little John, "by my true loyalty, you are one of the best swordsmen that I ever saw yet. If you could shoot as well with a bow you should go to greenwood with me, and twice a year Robin Hood would give you new clothing, and every year twenty mark to your wages." "Put up your sword," said the cook, "we will be fellows."

Then he fetched for Little John doe venison and good bread and wine, and they ate and drank together. And when they had well drunken, they plighted troth with each other that they would be with Robin Hood that very day by night-time. Then they went as fast as they could go to the Sheriff's treasure-house. The locks were of good steel, but they broke them every one. They took away the silver—pieces, bowls, spoons—they forgot none of it; nor the good coin, three hundred pound and more, and straight they took it all to Robin Hood, under the greenwood tree.

"God save you, my dear master," said Little John. And Robin said to Little John, "Welcome to you, Little John, and welcome to that good yeoman that

you bring with you ; and now tell me, what tidings from Nottingham ? " Then said Little John, " The proud Sheriff greets you well, and sends you here by me his cook, and his silver vessels, and three hundred pound of money." " I vow to God," said Robin, " and to the Trinity, it was never by his good will that all this came to my hands ! "

Then Little John bethought him of a shrewd wile. He left Robin there and the cook, and ran off through the forest ; five mile he ran seeking, and he happened on what he sought. He met the proud Sheriff, hunting with hound and horn. He came up courteously and kneeled before him, saying, " God save you, my dear master." Then the Sheriff asked him, " Reynold Greenleaf, where have you been now ? " " I have been in this forest," said Little John, " and there I saw a fair sight, one of the fairest sights that I ever saw yet. Yonder I saw a right royal hart ; his colour is green and in his company are seven score of deer in a herd ; on his tines are sixty points and more, so sharp that I durst not shoot for fear they should slay me." " I vow," said the Sheriff, " I would fain see that sight." " Make you ready, then, my dear master," said Little John, " and go thitherward with me."

So the Sheriff rode thitherward, and Little John, that was right smart of foot, ran with him, and presently they came where Robin was. Then said Little John to the Sheriff, " Here is the master hart." The Sheriff stood stock-still ; he was a sorry man. " Woe worth you, Reynold Greenleaf," he said, " you have betrayed me." " I vow," said Little John, " it is you, master, that are to blame ; when I was in your house at home I was mis-served of my dinner."

Then Robin took the Sheriff and bade him to supper, and soon they were set at table and served with bright silver ; and when the Sheriff saw his own silver, he could not eat for sorrow. But Robin said

to him, " Make good cheer, Sheriff, for charity's sake! And for the love of Little John, your life is granted you."

When they had well supped, the day was all gone. Then Robin called Little John and bade him pull off his hose and his shoes, his kirtle and his short cloak that was finely furred, and take only a green mantle, to wrap himself in for the night. And he commanded his sturdy young men that they also should lie under the greenwood tree, to sleep in that same sort, and so that the Sheriff might see them. And the Sheriff himself lay all night in his breeches and shirt, there in the greenwood; no wonder it was that his sides ached. But Robin Hood made jest at him, saying anon, " Make glad cheer, Sheriff, for charity's sake! for this is our order of life, you know, under the greenwood tree!" " This is a harder order," said the Sheriff, " than any friar or hermit keeps; I would not dwell long here for all the gold in merry England." " You shall dwell here with me," said Robin, " these twelve months to come; I will teach you, Sheriff, to be an outlaw."

Then said the Sheriff, " Rather than lie here another night, I pray you, Robin, smite off my head to-morrow morning, and I will forgive you." Then he said again, " For saint charity, let me go, and I will be the best friend that you ever had." " Then you shall swear me an oath," said Robin, " on my bright sword, that you will never plot evil against me by land or by water; and if you find any of my men, by day or by night, upon your oath you shall help them in any way you can."

The Sheriff swore his oath, and began to take his way home. He was fed full of the greenwood, as full as ever a rose-hip was filled with stone.

IV. ROBIN REPAID

The Sheriff went home to Nottingham. He was right glad to be gone ; and Robin and his merry men went back to the greenwood. Then, on a day, Little John said, " Go we to dinner," for it was time ; but Robin said, " Nay ! for I fear lest Our Lady be wroth with me, seeing that she hath not sent me yet my money." " Have no doubt, master," said Little John, " the sun is not yet at rest ; I dare say and swear that the knight is true." " Then take your bow in hand," said Robin, " and Much with you, and William Scathelock, and leave me here alone ; and go ye up to Watling Street and look if by chance ye may meet with some uncouth guest. Whether he be a messenger, or one that can make mirth, if he be a poor man he shall share of what I have."

So Little John started forth, half in trouble and grief, and he girt him with a good sword, and those three yeomen went up to Watling Street and looked east and west ; but they could see no man. But, as they looked, they were ware of a Black Monk, which came by the highway upon a good palfrey. Then Little John began to say to Much, " I dare well wager my life that monk hath brought our money. Make glad cheer, then, and dress your good yew bows ; see that your hearts are steady and sure, and your strings trusty and true. This monk hath seven pack-horses and two and fifty men ; no bishop in the land rides more royally. Brethren, we are no more than three ; but unless we bring them to dinner, we dare not face our master. Bend your bows, make them all stand ; I hold the foremost monk of them in my hand, for life or death." Then he called to the Black Monk. " Bide where you are, churl monk ! Go no further ; if you do, your death is in my hand ! Evil thrift upon

your head and your hat and your hat-band! You have angered our master, you have kept him so long fasting." "Who is your master?" said the monk. "Robin Hood," said Little John. "I never heard good of him," said the monk, "he is a strong thief." "You lie," said Little John, "and you shall rue it, he is a yeoman of the forest, and he has bidden you to dine by me."

Much was ready with a blunt arrow on string; quickly he shot the monk fair in the breast and felled him to the ground. Of all his two and fifty yeomen there stayed not one by him, save a little page and a groom that led the pack-horses. Then Little John and Much and Scathelock brought the Black Monk, whether he would or no, to the lodge-door in the greenwood, and bade him, despite his teeth, to speak with Robin Hood.

When Robin saw the monk, he put down his hood. The monk was not so courteous, he let his hood be. "He is a churl," said Little John wrathfully. "No matter," said Robin, "there can be no courtesy in such. How many men had this monk, Little John?" "Fifty and two when we met them," said Little John, "but many of them are fled." "Let blow a horn," said Robin Hood, "that our fellowship may know where we be." They blew, and seven score of sturdy yeomen came running up; each of them had a good mantle of scarlet and striped cloth, and they all came to Robin to hear what he would say to them.

Then they made the Black Monk wash and wipe, and sit down to dinner; and Robin Hood and Little John both served him together. "Eat heartily, monk," said Robin. "I thank you much, sir," he said. Then said Robin, "Where is your Abbey, when you are at home, and who is your patron saint?" "St. Mary's Abbey," said the monk, "but I am not master there." "What is your office?" asked Robin. "Sir, I am High Cellarer." "You

are the more welcome, so may I thrive," said Robin. "Fill of the best wine, Little John, this monk shall drink to me." Then Robin said again, "But I have had great marvel all this long day; I dread lest Our Lady be wroth with me, for she hath not sent me my money." "Have no doubt, master," said Little John, "you need have none. I dare well swear this monk hath brought it, for he is of her own Abbey." "Ay!" said Robin, "and she was surety between a knight and me, for a little money that I lent him here under the greenwood. Therefore, monk, I pray you let me see if you have brought that money, and if instead you have need of me, I will help you right soon."

The monk swore with sorry cheer. "I never heard tell a word of this suretyhood." "Monk," said Robin, "you are to blame; you told me with your own tongue that you are Our Lady's servant, and you are made her messenger to pay me my money; I thank you that you come true to your day. What is in your coffers? tell me truth, monk." "Sir," said he, "twenty mark, so may I thrive." "If I find more," said Robin, "you shall forfeit it. Look now, Little John, and tell me truth; if there be no more, no penny will I take."

Little John spread his mantle, as he had done before, and told out of the monk's mail-bag eight hundred pound. "Sir," he said, "the monk is true enough; Our Lady hath doubled your cast!" "What told I you, monk?" said Robin. "Our Lady is the truest woman that ever I found; never in all England was a better surety. Fill of the best wine, monk, and greet your Lady." Then he said, "Come forth, Little John: I know no better yeoman to search a monk's mail: go see how much is in yon other coffer." "By Our Lady," said the monk, "what courtesy is this, to bid a man to dinner and then rob him?" "It is our old manner," said Robin, "to leave but little behind when we dine."

The monk took horse to go. "I am sorry I came near you," he said. "I might have dined cheaper elsewhere." "Greet well your Abbot from me," said Robin, "and bid him send me such a monk every day to dine with me!"

Now leave we the Black Monk, and speak we of that knight; for he came to keep his day, before it was dark. He came straight to Barnesdale, and under the greenwood tree he found Robin Hood and all his merry men. He lit down off his palfrey and courteously doffed his hood. Then said Robin, "I pray you, Sir Knight, tell me what need drives you to greenwood. Tell me truly, have you your land again?" "Yea," said the knight, "thanks to God and to you. But take it not ill that I have been so long; I came by a wrestling, and there I helped a poor yeoman, that was being put down by wrong." "Now for that," said Robin, "Sir Knight, I thank you; whoever helps a good yeoman, I will be his friend."

Then said the knight, "Take here the four hundred pound, which you lent me; and for your courtesy these twenty marks beside." "Nay!" said Robin, "for Our Lady, by her cellarer, hath sent me my money; and if I should take it twice, it were shame to me." So Robin told his tale, and laughed over it; but the knight said again, "By my troth, here is your money ready." "Use it well, gentle knight," said Robin, "and be welcome under my trysting tree. But what are these bows for and these arrows?" "With your will," said the knight, "they are a poor present from me."

Then said Robin, "Come forth, Little John, go to my treasury, and bring me four hundred pound that the monk overpaid me. Now, gentle knight, take here four hundred pound and buy you therewith horse and harness and gilt spurs; and if you lack more to spend, come to Robin Hood, and by my

troth you shall never go short while I have anything to give. And use well your four hundred pound, which I lent you, and take my counsel and strip yourself never again so bare."

Thus good Robin helped the knight of all his trouble ; and so God help us all !

V. RESCUE FOR RESCUE

Hear now again of the proud Sheriff of Nottingham, how he cried a match for all the best archers of the North Country ; whereat he that should shoot best and farthest, fair and low, at a pair of goodly butts set up under the greenwood, should have for prize a right good silver arrow, headed and feathered with rich gold. The news of this came to Robin Hood under his trysting tree in Sherwood. " Make ready now, my merry men," he said. " You and I will go to this meeting and try the Sheriff, if he will keep his oath or no." So they took their bows and went with Robin, seven score of sturdy men.

When they came to Nottingham they found the butts set up fair and long, and many bold archers with stout bows shooting at them. Then said Robin to his men, " There shall but six of you shoot with me ; the rest shall stand with bows bent, to keep guard lest I be taken unaware." So three outlaws shot their round, and then a fourth ; the fourth was Robin Hood, and the proud Sheriff knew him as he stood by the butt. Thrice Robin shot, and every time he split the wand. Then Little John and Much and Scathelock shot like good archers ; but when all had shot all their rounds, Robin Hood was the best every time. So the good silver arrow was delivered to him, as the most worthy ; and courteously he took the gift, and made ready to go home to Sherwood.

Then the Sheriff's men raised hue and cry against

Robin Hood, and began to blow great horns. "Woe take your treason!" said Robin, "and woe take you, proud Sheriff, for treating your guest to such cheer. In the forest yonder you made me a promise of another sort. I tell you, if I had you again under my trysting tree in the greenwood, you should leave a better pledge than your true loyalty!" Then there was bending of bows on this side and on that, and the arrows began to glide; many a kirtle was torn, and many a man hurt. The outlaws shot so strong that no force could drive them back, and soon the Sheriff's men were right glad to run.

When Robin saw that the ambush was broken, he would gladly have gone away to the greenwood; but there was many an arrow shot among his company, and Little John was hurt full sore in the knee, so that he could neither walk nor ride. "Master," he said, "if ever you loved me, and if ever I served you, now let the proud Sheriff not take me alive; but draw your brown sword and smite off my head, or wound me dead and wide, that there be no life left in me." "Little John," said Robin, "I would not have you dead, for all the gold in merry England." Then he took him up on his own back, and bore him away; many a time he laid him down, and shot another arrow, and took him up again. So he brought him a good mile, to a fair castle a little within the wood; double ditched it was, and walled about. And there dwelt that gentle knight, Sir Richard at Lee, to whom Robin had lent his money in the greenwood. The knight took in Robin and all his company. "Welcome, Robin Hood," he said. "Welcome you are to me, and much I thank you for your courtesy and comfort to me in greenwood; I love no man in the world so much as I do you, and right here you shall be, for all the proud Sheriff of Nottingham. Shut the gates there, and draw the bridge, and let no man come in; and come you all of you and make ready, and go to

the walls. And one thing I promise you, Robin; you shall stay here these twelve days, to dine and sup with me." So readily and anon the tables were laid and cloths spread, and Robin Hood and his merry men went to meat.

But the proud Sheriff of Nottingham hurried away full fast to the High Sheriff, to rout up the countryside, and they came all about the knight's castle and beset it. The proud Sheriff summoned the knight loudly, "Traitor knight, you are keeping here the King's enemies, against the law." "Sir," replied the knight from his high wall, "I will avow all that is here done, and answer it with all my lands, as I am a true knight. Go your way, sir, and do no more to me, until you know what our King will say to you."

So the Sheriff had his answer, and away he went to London town to tell the King. And finely he told him of Robin Hood and his bold archers, and of that gentle knight, how that he said he would avow what he had done to maintain the outlaws. "He would be lord," he said, "and set you, Sir King, at naught, through all the North Country." Then the King said, "Within this fortnight I will be at Nottingham, and I will take Robin Hood, and that knight too. Go home, Sheriff, and do as I bid you; make ready good archers enough through all the countryside."

Then the Sheriff took his leave of King Edward and went his way; but before he came home Robin had gone back to greenwood, and Little John was whole of the arrow shot in his knee, and he came straight to Robin, and they walked the forest under the green leaves as they did aforetime, and the Sheriff was right wroth to hear of it.

He had failed to take Robin, and lost his prey; but day and night he plotted against the gentle knight. And at last he lay in wait for him as he went hawking by the river side, and took him with a strong force of men of arms, and bound him hand

and foot and led him away to Nottingham; and he swore he would give a hundred pound if he could take Robin too.

When the knight's wife heard this, she set her on a good palfrey and rode anon to greenwood; and when she came into the forest, she found Robin and all his men under the trysting tree. "God save you, good Robin," she said, "and all your company; grant me a boon for our dear Lady's sake! Let not my wedded lord be shamefully slain; he is fast bound at Nottingham, and all for love of you." "What man has taken your lord?" asked Robin. "The proud Sheriff," she said, "he has taken him as I tell you; he is not yet three miles on his way."

Then Robin started up like a man mad. "Make you ready, my merry men, for God's sake; he that leaveth this knight in sorrow shall no longer dwell with me." Quickly there were seven score bows bent, and seven score men running forth; they stayed for neither hedge nor ditch. "I vow to God," said Robin, "I would fain see that good knight, and if I may but find him he shall be well quit." They came to Nottingham and went boldly through the street; soon they met with the proud Sheriff and his men. "Stand, proud Sheriff," said Robin, "stand and speak with me; I would fain hear some tidings of our King. Dear God! I have not run so fast on foot this seven year; I tell you well, it was not for your good that I came!"

Robin bent his bow and drew a full good arrow. He hit the proud Sheriff that he lay on the ground; and before he could rise up to stand upon his feet with his bright brand he smote off his head. "Lie you there, proud Sheriff, and ill go with you; for no man might trust you while you were alive." Then his men drew out their bright swords and laid on to the Sheriff's men, and drove them down the street together. Robin ran to the knight and cut his bonds,

and put a bow in his hand and bade him stand by him. "Leave your horse behind," he said, "and learn to run afoot like us. You shall go with me to greenwood, and there dwell till I have got us all grace from Edward our King."

VI. ROBIN AND THE KING

Now the King, with a great array of knights, came to Nottingham to take Robin and that gentle knight, if he could. And first he asked the men of that country about them both, and they told him all the case. And when our King understood their tale he seized into his own hand all the knight's lands, and rode away to hunt the deer. All over Lancashire he went, far and near, till he came to his royal park of Plompton; but he missed many of his deer. Where he was wont to see many a herd, he could scarce find one deer that bore any good horn.

At this the King was wondrous wroth, and he swore a great oath: "I would that I had Robin Hood here before my eyes! And he that shall smite off that knight's head, and bring it to me, shall have all the knight's lands. I will give them to him by charter, sealed with my own hand, to have and to hold for ever in all merry England." Then a good old knight that was there said to him, "Ah! my liege lord, let me say to you one word: there is no man in this country can hold the knight's lands so long as Robin Hood can ride or run or bear a bow. Give them, my lord king, to no man that you wish well to, lest he lose the best ball in his hood, and that is his head."

Now the King dwelt half a year and more in Nottingham, and could never hear where Robin Hood was. But Robin went from nook to nook and from hill to hill, and killed the King's deer as he pleased. At

last came a proud forester and said to the King, " Sir, if you would see Robin Hood, you must do as I would have you. Take five of your best knights, and walk down to yon Abbey and get you monks' habits ; then I will be your guide, and I dare lay my head that before you come to Nottingham you shall meet with Robin, if he is still alive."

Quickly the King and his five knights dressed them in monk's habit ; the King had a great broad hat on his crown over his cowl, as if he were an Abbot, and stiff boots beneath. He rode to the greenwood chanting as he went, and his five monks with him all in grey. His mail and his great baggage-horses followed behind. When they had gone a mile under the greenwood they found good Robin standing in the path, and many a bold archer with him. Robin took the King's horse by the bridle and said, " Sir Abbot, by your leave, you must stay awhile. We be yeomen of this forest, we live by the King's deer and have no other shift, but you have churches and rents and gold in great plenty ; for saint charity, give us some of your spending."

Then the King said, " I have brought with me to greenwood no more than forty pound. I have been at Nottingham this fortnight past with our King, and I have spent much on many great lords. So I have but forty pound with me ; but if I had a hundred, I would give you half of it." Robin took the forty pound, and parted it in two. Half of it he gave to his men to make merry ; the other half to the King, saying, " Sir, this for your spending ; we shall meet another day." " I thank you," said the seeming Abbot, " but Edward our King greets you by me and bids you to Nottingham to dine with him, and for token he sends you his seal." With that he took out the broad seal and showed it him, and Robin knelt in courtesy. " I love no man in all the world so well as my King. My lord's seal is welcome ; and for

love of my King, you, Sir Abbot, shall dine with me to-day under my trysting tree."

He led the King there by the hand, and there was many a deer slain and making ready; and Robin took a great horn and blew it, and seven score of stout young men came ready and knelt a-row before Robin. The King said to himself, "Here is a wondrous seemly sight; his men are more at his bidding than my men are at mine!" Quickly was their dinner prepared, and they went to it. Both Robin and Little John served the King with all their might—they set before him the fat venison, the good white bread, the good red wine, and fine brown ale. "Make good cheer, Abbot," said Robin, "and a blessing on you for your tidings. Now, before you go hence, you shall see what kind of life we lead; then you can inform the King when you are with him again."

With that they all started up and bent their bows smartly—the King was never so aghast in his life, he thought he was a lost man. But they set up two wands and went to shoot at them. The King said the mark was too far by fifty yards. Each wand had a rose garland about it, and Robin said, "Whoever shoots outside the garland shall forfeit his tackle, be it never so fine, and yield it to the man that beats him, and he shall stand a buffet on his bare head besides." And all that fell to Robin's lot he beat, and buffeted right sorely. Little John and Scathelock, and Gilbert of the white hand, whenever they missed the garland, Robin smote them sorely. Twice he shot and cleft the wand; but at the last shot he missed the garland by three fingers' width and more. Then said good Gilbert, "Master, your tackle is lost; stand forth and take your pay." "If it be so," said Robin, "Sir Abbot, I deliver up my arrow to you, and pray you to serve me my buffet."

"It is not for one of my Order," said the King,

" to smite a good yeoman." " Smite on boldly," said Robin, " I give you full leave." At that same word the King folded back the sleeve of his gown, and gave Robin such a buffet that he well-nigh fell to ground. " I vow," said Robin, " you are a stalwart monk; there's pith in your arm. I wager you can shoot."

Then he looked the King in the face and knew him; so did the gentle knight, Sir Richard at Lee, and together they knelt down before him. And when the wild outlaws saw them kneel, they all did the same. " Now I know you," said Robin. " My Lord the King of England!" " Then, Robin," said the King, " of your goodness and grace I ask you mercy for my men and me." " Yes, 'fore God!" said Robin, " and I also crave mercy, my Lord King, for me and for my men." " Yes, 'fore God!" said the King, " and therefore I came myself, that you should leave the greenwood, you and all your company, and come home, sir, to my Court, and dwell with me there." " Right so shall it be," said Robin, " I will come to your Court and try your service; and I will bring with me my men, seven score and three. But, if I like not your service, I will come again to greenwood and shoot at the dun deer as I was wont."

Then said the King, " Now, Robin, have you any green cloth that you will sell to me?" " Yea," said Robin, " I were a fool else; for another day I guess you will be clothing me, against Christmas." Then the King cast off his Abbot's gown and did on him a green garment, and his knights likewise: and when they were all clothed in Lincoln green they cast away their grey, and the King said, " Now will we go to Nottingham." So they bent their bows and went toward Nottingham, shooting all in company as they went, like outlaws.

The King and Robin rode together, and by the way they shot pluck-buffet, as they had done in greenwood at the garland: and the King won many a

buffet of Robin, and Robin spared him not. "God help me!" said the King, "your game is not easy to learn! I should not win a shot of you though I shot for a whole year!"

Now, when they came near to Nottingham, the people all stood staring at them; they saw nothing but mantles of green that covered the fields on every side, and one to another they began to say, "I fear our King be slain, and if Robin comes to town he will leave not one of us alive." Then they began to flee in haste, yeomen and knaves and old women that could but hobble. The King laughed, and bade them turn again, and when they saw it was the King they were right glad; they fell to eating and drinking, and singing loudly. Then the King called Sir Richard at Lee. And there he gave him all his land again and bade him be his good liege—and at that Robin too knelt upon his knee and thanked the King.

So Robin came to Court; and when he had dwelt in the King's Court but fifteen months, he had spent a hundred pound, beside wages to his men—for in every place where he came he would lay down both for knights and for squires. Then, by ten and by ten, he sent his merry men away; and when the year was all gone, he had none left but two; Little John and good Scathelock.

Now it chanced on a day that he saw the young men shooting, and they shot at a far mark. "Alas!" then he said, "my wealth is gone. Time was that I was a good archer, stiff and strong—I was counted the best archer in all merry England. Alas, and wellaway! Sorrow will kill me, if I dwell longer with the King."

Then Robin went to the King and knelt before him. "My Lord the King," he said, "grant me my asking. I built me in Barnesdale a chapel, seemly to look upon. I named it for Saint Mary Magdalen, and I would fain go thereto. This seven-night I have

known neither sleep nor wink, and all these seven days I have neither eaten nor drunken, I long so to be in Barnesdale. I cannot stay therefrom: I have vowed to go a pilgrimage thither, barefoot and in woollen shirt." "If it be so," said the King, "I give you leave to dwell away from me for seven nights, but no longer." "I thank you, my Lord King," said Robin, and he took his leave full courteously, and went straight to greenwood.

He came to greenwood in a merry morning, and there he heard the small notes of birds singing. "It is a far time," he said, "since I was here last; it would please me to shoot a little at the dun deer." Then he bent his bow and slew a full great hart, and then he took his horn and blew it. And all the outlaws of the forest knew that horn, and in a short space they gathered them all together, seven score of sturdy men a-row. And there they did off their hoods and knelt before Robin. "Welcome, dear master," they said, "welcome under this trysting tree!"

And there, for twenty year and two, Robin dwelt with them in greenwood; for all his dread lord, King Edward, he would never to Court again.

VII. THE DEATH OF ROBIN HOOD

Hear now how Robin Hood, that was never taken nor beguiled by living man, was brought to his death by a wicked woman, the Prioress of Kirkleys, that was nigh of kin to him. On a day, when he had come to his old age, Robin and Little John went walking over a bank of broom, and Robin said to Little John, "Little John, you and I have shot for many a pound together, and now I am not able to shoot one shot more; my broad arrows will no longer fly. But I have a cousin that lives down below yonder, and please God she will bleed me. I shall never be able

to eat or drink again," he said, " my meat will do me no good, till I have been to the Abbey of Kirkleys to be bled. The Dame Prioress is my aunt's daughter, and nigh of kin to me. I know that for all the world she would never do me harm."

" You go not by my assent, master," said Little John, " without you take with you half a hundred of your best bowmen." Then said Robin, " If you are afeard, Little John, I counsel you to stay at home." " If you are wroth, my dear master," said Little John, " you shall never hear another word from me."

So Robin went to the Abbey of Kirkleys and knocked upon the gate ; and the Dame Prioress rose up and let him in. Then Robin gave her twenty pound in gold, and bade her spend that for him as long as it lasted, and when she would she should have more. " Cousin Robin," she said, " will you please to sit down and drink with me ? " " I thank you, no," said Robin. " I will neither eat nor drink till you have let me blood."

Then Dame Prioress went above, and came quickly down again with a pair of blood-irons in her hand, all wrapped in silk. " Set a chafing-dish to the fire," she said, " and strip your sleeve "—it is an unwise man that will not take a warning ! She laid the blood-irons to Robin's vein, and pierced it, and let out the good red blood. And first it bled thick and fast, and afterwards it bled thin and slow. Then Robin knew well that there was treason. And there she blooded him as long as one drop of blood would run—all that livelong day she let him bleed, and until noon the next.

Then Robin, being fast locked up in his room, bethought him of the casement there ; but he was so weak that he could neither leap nor climb down. Then he bethought him of his bugle-horn, that hung down by his side. He set the horn to his mouth, and he blew three blasts.

Weak enough they were, but Little John heard

them where he sat under a tree in greenwood. "I fear," he said, "my master is now near death, he blows so wearily." Then he rose up and went as fast as he could run to the Abbey of Kirkleys, and when he came there he broke all the locks, without and within, until he found Robin; then he fell on his knee before him. "A boon, a boon, master!" he cried. "What boon is this that you beg of me?" asked Robin. And Little John said, "That I may burn the Abbey of Kirkleys and all their nunnery."

"Nay, nay," said Robin, "that boon I'll not grant. In all my time I never yet hurt woman, nor man in woman's company. In all my life I never yet hurt a maid, and it shall not be done in my death. But bend me my bow, and give it into my hand; one more broad arrow I will let fly, and where that arrow is found there you shall dig my grave. And at my head and at my feet you shall lay a green sod, and at my side my bent bow, that made sweet music to my ear, that when I am dead men may say: 'Here lies bold Robin Hood.'"

So Robin kept faith with Our Lady, whom he loved.

VI. THE NUT-BROWN MAID

He. *Be it right or wrong, these men among*
On women do complain;
Affirming this, how that it is
A labour spent in vain
To love them wele; for never a dele
They love a man again:
For let a man do what he can
Their favour to attain,
Yet if a new to them pursue,
Their first true lover than
Laboureth for naught; for from her thought
He is a banished man.

She. *I say not nay, but that all day*
It is both written and said
That woman's faith is, as who saith,
All utterly decayed :
But nevertheless, right good witnèss
In this case might be laid
That they love true and continùe :
Record the Nut-Brown Maid,
Which, whèn her love came her to prove,
To her to make his moan,
Would not depart ; for in her heart
She loved but him alone.

He. *Then between us let us discuss*
What was all the manere
Between them two : we will also
Tell all the pain in fere
That she was in. Now I begin,
So that ye me answere :
Wherefore all ye that present be,
I pray you, give an ear.
I am the Knight. I come by night,
As secret as I can,
Saying, Alas ! thus standeth the case,
I am a banished man.

She. *And I your will for to fulfill*
In this will not refuse ;
Trusting to show, in wordes few,
That men have an ill use—
To their own shame—women to blame,
And causeless them accuse.
Therefore to you I answer now,
All women to excuse—
Mine own heart dear, with you what cheer ?
I pray you, tell anone ;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. It standeth so : a deed is do
Whereof great harm shall grow :
My destiny is for to die
A shameful death, I trow ;
Or else to flee. The t'one must be.
None other way I know
But to withdraw as an outlàw,
And take me to my bow.
Wherefore adieu, mine own heart true !
None other rede I can :
For I must to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. O Lord, what is this worldis bliss,
That changeth as the moon !
My summer's day in lusty May
Is darked before the noon.
I hear you say, farewell : Nay, nay,
We dèpart not so soon.
What say ye so ? whither will ye go ?
Alas ! what have ye done ?
All my welfàre to sorrow and care
Should change, if ye were gone :
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. I can believe it shall you grieve,
And somewhat you distrain ;
But afterward, your paines hard
Within a day or twain
Shall soon aslake ; and ye shall take
Comfort to you again.
Why should ye ought ? for, to make thought,
Your labour were in vain.
And thus I do ; and pray you to,
As hartely as I can :
For I must to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Now, sith that ye have showed to me
The secret of your mind,
I shall be plain to you again,
Like as ye shall me find.
Sith it is so that ye will go,
I will not live behind.
Shall never be said the Nut-brown Maid
Was to her love unkind.
Make you ready, for so am I,
Although it were anone :
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. Yet I you rede to take good heed
What men will think and say :
Of young, of old, it shall be told
That ye be gone away
Your wanton will for to fulfil,
In green-wood you to play ;
And that ye might for your delight
No longer make delay.
Rather than ye should thus for me
Be called an ill woman
Yet would I to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Though it be sung of old and young
That I should be to blame,
Theirs be the charge that speak so large
In hurting of my name :
For I will prove that faithful love
It is devoid of shame ;
In your distress and heaviness
To part with you the same :
And sure all tho that do not so
True lovers are they none :
For in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. I counsel you, Remember how
It is no maiden's law
Nothing to doubt, but to run out
To wood with an outlàw.
For ye must there in your hand bear
A bow ready to draw ;
And as a thief thus must you live
Ever in dread and awe ;
Whereby to you great harm might grow :
Yet had I liever than
That I had to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. I think not nay but as ye say ;
It is no maiden's lore ;
But love may make me for your sake,
As I have said before,
To come on foot, to hunt and shoot,
To get us meat and store ;
For so that I your company
May have, I ask no more.
From which to part it maketh my heart
As cold as any stone ;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. For an outlàw this is the law,
That men him take and bind :
Without pitie, hangèd to be,
And waver with the wind.
If I had need (as God forbede !)
What socours could ye find ?
Forsooth I trow, you and your bow
For fear would draw behind.
And no mervail ; for little avail
Were in your counsel than :
Wherefore I'll to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Right well know ye that women be
But feeble for to fight ;
No womanhede it is, indeed,
To be bold as a knight :
Yet in such fear if that ye were
With enemies day and night,
I would withstand, with bow in hand,
To grieve them as I might,
And you to save ; as women have
From death men many one :
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. Yet take good hede ; for ever I drede
That ye could not sustain
The thorny ways, the deep vallèys,
The snow, the frost, the rain,
The cold, the heat ; for dry or wete,
We must lodge on the plain ;
And, us above, no other roof
But a brake bush or twain :
Which soon should grieve you, I believe ;
And ye would gladly than
That I had to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Sith I have here been partynere
With you of joy and bliss,
I must alsò part of your woe
Endure, as reason is :
Yet I am sure of one pleasùre,
And shortly it is this—
That where ye be, me seemeth, pardé,
I could not fare amiss.
Without more speech I you beseech
That we were shortly gone ;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. If ye go thyder, ye must consider,
When ye have lust to dine,
There shall no meat be for to gete,
Neither bere, ale, ne wine,
Ne shetès clean, to lie between,
Made of thread and twine ;
None other house, but leaves and boughs,
To cover your head and mine.
Lo, mine heart sweet, this ill diète
Should make you pale and wan :
Wherefore I'll to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Among the wild deer such an archère,
As men say that ye be,
Ne may not fail of good vitayle
Where is so great plentè ;
And water clear of the rivere
Shall be full sweet to me ;
With which in hele I shall right wele
Endure, as ye shall see ;
And, or we go, a bed or two
I can provide anone ;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. Lo yet, before, ye must do more,
If ye will go with me :
As, cut your hair up by your ear,
Your kirtle by the knee ;
With bow in hand for to withstand
Your enemies, if need be :
And this same night, before daylight,
To woodward will I flee.
If that ye will all this fulfil,
Do it shortly as ye can :
Else will I to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. I shall as now do more for you
Than 'longeth to womanhede ;
To short my hair, a bow to bear,
To shoot in time of need.
O my sweet mother ! before all other
For you I have most drede !
But now, adieu ! I must ensue
Where fortune doth me lead.
All this make ye : Now let us flee ;
The day cometh fast upon :
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. Nay, nay, not so ; ye shall not go,
And I shall tell you why—
Your appetite is to be light
Of love, I well espy :
For, right as ye have said to me,
In likewise hardily
Ye would answere whosoever it were,
In way of company :
It is said of old, Soon hot, soon cold ;
And so is a womàn :
Wherefore I to the wood will go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. If ye take heed, it is no need
Such words to say to me ;
For oft ye prayed, and long assayed,
Or I loved you, pardè ;
And though that I of ancestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have you proved how I you loved,
A squire of low degree ;
And ever shall, whatso befall,
To die therefore anone ;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. A baron's child to be beguiled,
It were a cursèd deed!
To be felàw with an outlaw—
Almighty God forbede!
Yet better were the poor squyere
Alone to forest yede
Than ye shall say another day
That by my cursèd rede
Ye were betrayed. Wherefore, good maid,
The best rede that I can,
Is, that I to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Whatever befall, I never shall
Of this thing be upbraid:
But if ye go, and leave me so,
Then have ye me betrayed.
Remember you wele, how that ye dele;
For if ye, as ye said,
Be so unkind to leave behind
Your love, the Nut-brown Maid,
Trust me truly that I shall die
Soon after ye be gone:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. If that ye went, ye should repent;
For in the forest now
I have purveyed me of a maid
Whom I love more than you:
Another more fair than ever ye were
I dare it well avow;
And of you both each should be wroth
With other, as I trow:
It were mine ease to live in peace;
So will I, if I can:
Wherefore I to the wood will go,
Alone, a banished man.

She. Though in the wood I understood
Ye had a paramour,
All this may nought remove my thought,
But that I will be your' :
And she shall find me soft and kind
And courteis every hour ;
Glad to fulfil all that she will
Command me, to my power :
For had ye, lo, an hundred mo,
Yet would I be that one :
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. Mine own dear love, I see the prove
That ye be kind and true ;
Of maid, of wife, in all my life,
The best that ever I knew.
Be merry and glad ; be no more sad ;
The case is changèd new ;
For it were ruth that for your truth
Ye should have cause to rue.
Be not dismayed, whatsoever I said
To you when I began :
I will not to the green-wood go ;
I am no banished man.

She. These tidings be more glad to me
Than to be made a queen,
If I were sure they should endure ;
But it is often seen
When men will break promise they speak
The wordis on the splene.
Ye shape some wile me to beguile,
And steal from me, I ween :
Then were the case worse than it was,
And I more wo-begone :
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He. Ye shall not nede further to drede :
I will not disparàge
You (God defend), sith you descend
Of so great a linàge.
Now understand : to Westmoreland,
Which is my heritage,
I will you bring ; and with a ring,
By way of marriàge
I will you take, and lady make,
As shortly as I can :
Thus have you won an Earles son,
And not a banished man.

Here may ye see that women be
In love meek, kind, and stable ;
Let never man reprove them than,
Or call them variable ;
But rather pray God that we may
To them be comfortable ;
Which sometime proveth such as He loveth,
If they be charitable.
For sith men would that women should
Be meek to them each one ;
Much more ought they to God obey,
And serve but Him alone.

Anonymous (15th century).

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